

#### DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

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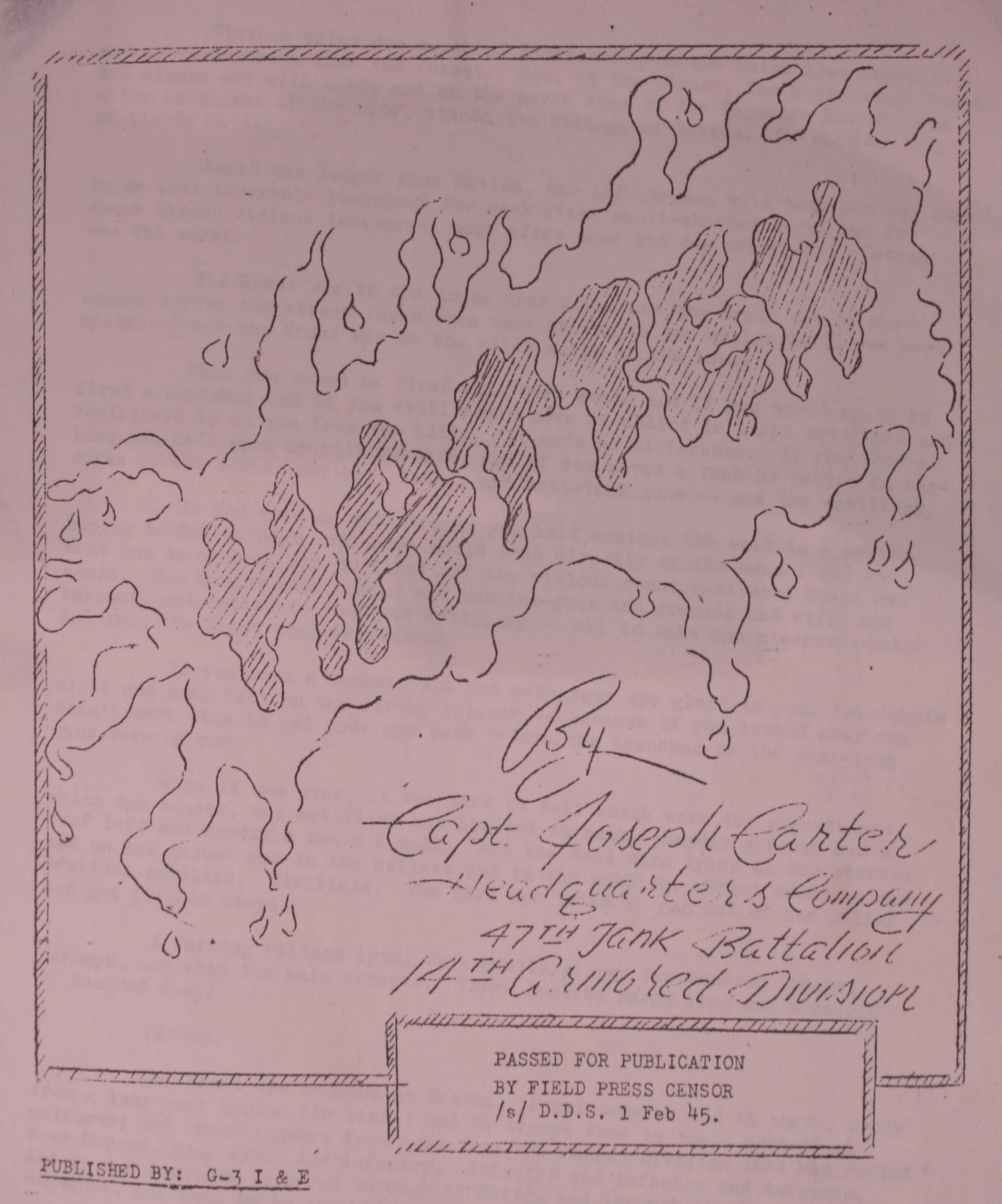
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Attached for your collection is a copy of a writeup of a WWII small unit action. The unit was the 47th Tank Bn, 14th Armored Division. The action was a battle at Hatten, Germany, which was the most intensive combat action seen by the battalion. As such, this item might be useful for future military historians of this period.

Sincerely,

1 Incl

William A. Hambley, Jr. LTC MI USAR



THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE MAILED HOME

Sixteen miles due north of Strassbourg-on-the-Rhine lies Hageunau and above Haguenau lies the forest. Now, in the winter, the woods stand black miles northeast of the city, stands the village of the Haguenau Forest, ten of bloody Hatten.

Anzio was longer than Hatten, the infantrymen will tell you who dug in on that miserable beachhead for week after shell-shocked week; but for was the worst.

The Kraut was in the house next door, and the Kraut was in the houses across the street (more than once he was in the cellar while you were upstairs) and the Kraut was on the hills north of the town.

When you moved he fired with burp guns; and if you moved again he fired a bazooka; and if you still could move he called in corps artillery and lone man he'd open up with mortars; and if you moved a tank he called in bazookas by the squad, mortars, tanks, and anti-tank guns -- and the artillery.

If you were an infantryman you laid against the wall in a cellar, hoping to God no high explosive would land directly on the house; and you went out to attack, and to fight off the vicious counter-attacks again and bayonet, and called in your own artillery — all to take one miserable house. And then the Kraut counterattacked.

If you were a tanker, you sat with your eye glued to your telescopic sight and your foot on the firing trigger -- because if you looked away you guns were on you.

When it was over, it was hard to tell which were the streets and which the houses, the artillery had blasted so much. Hardly a house had a and on the ground and in the cellars and in the rubbish. Kraut soldiers and and got fifteen steps.

A farming village lying on a gentle slope; two hundred houses, of hundred deep.

Three hundred yards long and a couple

Hatten.

The Kraut was stopped at Hatten. Paratroops he had in there, cocky from a long rest behind the lines; and SS troops dead in their neat black uniforms; and crack tankers from more than one Panzer Division that had rolled over Europe, long ago. And infantry. Infantry and infantry and infantry. Haguenau, and then on to the wide plain at Strassbourg.

We moved up the night of January the 12th.

A tank battalion.

A tank battalion of the 14th Armored Division (commanded by Lt. Col. James W. Lann of Amory, Mississippi, promoted on the field of battle), minus Company B, still fighting in another engagement near Drussenheim.

About 25 medium tanks, thirty tons of armor plate apiece; more than 15 light tanks, sixteen tons each; assault tanks and tanks, vehicle recovery; mortars; kitchen trucks and gas trucks and ammo trucks; half-tracks and trailers; maintenance vehicles and wreckers and welders and peeps. Company A and Company C. Company D. Headquarters Company and Service Company. Battalion maintenance and battalion medics. Tank battalion minus.

Blackout.

If you were a driver, you saw nothing except the vegueness of the fields alongside, the dark strip of the road a few feet ahead, the deeper black of the woods. All the light in the world was the twin red blackeut tail-lights of the vehicle in front and the indirect glow of the dials on the instrument panel. If you were a vehicle commander you stood up every now and then to check your column — it was too cold to stay standing. You could see the long line of tanks and half-tracks behind you, creeping ominously along through the blackness, blackout lights just barely visible. Every now and then you heard the angry howl of a 500-horse tank engine as the driver shifted for a bad stretch of road.

The bivouac party under Lt. Tom Anderberg, of Hudson, South Dakota, had gone ahead. It had found a big house for the battalion C.P. and had gone down the streets, knocking at each door and asking for rooms (Soldaten schlaffen herein? Americanische soldaten?) and he found places for all the men to sleep in the Alsatian homes, and courtyards in which to park the tanks.

We moved in before dawn, the sky a faint gray instead of black and the stucco-and-timber farm houses of the village huddled together like gray stone sheep with slanted red tile roofs, just under a ridge of land and around a bend in the road.

The bivouac party was waiting for us to show us the battalion C.P. and the houses where we were to live; but the tanks stayed on the streets because we were to start the attack at 0530. The crews checked them over.

and nearby the artillery was firing, the sharp cracks of the 105's sounding as if they were in the next street. And you could hear the whine and the empty whooom of incoming mail somewhere close enough.

It was simple. To defend, we were to attack Hatten with the infantry and drive the enemy out. The infantry would pass through us and take up defensive positions on the high ground beyond the town.

In the C.P., Col. Lann was bending over the situation map with Maj. Alton S. Kircher of Gladstone, Michigan, the exec. Lt. Paul C. Willis, the communications officer, of Canton, North Carolina, was checking his radios and Capt. Solly A. Spivek of Chicago, Illinois, was setting up his map.

Hatten was due east of us then.

A single track French railway ran east and west, passed a few hundred yards south of Hatten and continued on east. Halfway between us and Hatten, to clean out Rittershoffen. Another unit was

This, then, was the situation:

We were to pass to the south of Rittershoffen, along the railroad; we were to swing north and drive into Hatten. An infantry battalion was to be with us; the infantry was to be to the south of the railroad, and we to the north.

The Kraut could see us from the high ground north of Hatten. For the land slopes gently up from the north edge of the Haguenau Forest to the crest above the Seltzbach River, and it was on that crest that the Kraut had set up his observation posts. Hatten is about half way up that gentle slope.

From the east end of Rittershoffen, to, you could see into Hatten, and you could fire into Hatten. And the Kraut held the east end of Rittershoffen with infantry and two captured American 57mm anti-tank guns.

Capt. Harold D. Persky of St. Paul, Minnesota, commanded Company be the attack company; and one of his platoons, commanded by Lt. Seth Sprague moving south of the railroad. At least, Lt. Sprague was in command of the platoon that morning. Or what was then the platoon.

Company A. Commanded by Capt. Richard A. Tharpe, of Macon, Georgia, was in support. So were the assault guns commanded by Lt. Robert C. Harper of Auburn, Nebraska. In reserve was Company D, commanded by Capt. Henry P. Tilden of Weymouth, Massachusetts.

Let us follow Lt. Sprague.

As the eastern sky turns from gray to lighter gray, directly ahead from Beside him rise the steep-roofed, plaster and timber houses, black in ing in the turret, hatch open, muffled in his combat suit and scarf. It is

flashes on and he hears his call word crackling.

"Move out." Move out."

"Wilco," he says, and switches to interphone. "Move out," he says

The tank engine roars suddenly in his ears and he does not hear the driver shift into gear. The tank lurches a little and pulls ahead. He feels its familiar grating progress as the steel tracks claw at the ice-hard roads. The engine roars again and the driver shifts to third. Sprague's head is even with the windows of the houses and he can see the road better before him.

Presently he is out of town and following the road by the ghostly white fields. On both sides of the road are lines of trees, poplar and sycamore, as there always are in this country. Now he is watching for the cross road, his line of departure. There is a frosty mist in the air.

He finds the cross road. It is 0803.

"Crossed line one," he says, and a voice answers: "Roger."

He continues on, slowly. It will be a gray, cold, miserable day. The mist is falling on the fields, freezing on the ground. It is turning the trees of the blackwoods to his south a perfect white.

By 0850 he has moved 800 yards. Passed phase line two.

At 0913.

"Heavy enemy artillery fire," he says. "Heavy enemy artillery fire."

"Where is it?"

"Don't know," he says. "Can't see. Visibility poor. All I know

The enemy is on the high ground to his left; they are behind him now, in Rittershoffen. He is in his tank, the engine roaring hot behind him, now. He cannot see the infantry, but he can hear the high-pitched scream of the artillery, right on him; and he can see the craters suddenly appear in as one hits close, and he can hear the shrapnel smash angrily at the armor

He is headed northeast, directly toward Hatten. He is within antitank gun range, but he cannot see any anti-tank guns. He can make out the houses in Hatten, the slanted roofs white from mist -- a small farming village lying on the slope above him.

At 0930.

Capt. Persky is on the air.

"Can't contact Sprague," he says. "I've lost two tanks out of his platoon." Later it turns out to be three, and fourteen men.

Lt. Francis E. Marshall of Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania, Company A, is dispatched to go into town to assist the infantry. He goes east, then north. All this while the bitter fighting is going on. By now it is plain where the anti-tank guns are firing from: from the south edge of Hatten, and from much farther east, so that when Marshall turns north these anti-tank guns are on his right flank.

The American artillery is not quiet. As Marshall reports the locations of the guns, battalion after battalion sends out its roaring volleys from far back. Marshall can see the bursts of their hits. Again and again it seems the guns are knocked out; but either the Germans send up new crews, or they send up new guns, for presently the anti-tank guns start firing again.

And all along to the east the burp guns are firing on the infantry; and the Kraut artillery comes in again and again; and the mortars fall almost without stopping; and men are hit, and men are blown apart, and men lie on the frozen ground in helpless fear and hear the mortars coming. And half laugh when they miss.

So it is not enough to say that Lt. Marshall got three of his tanks into the western edge of Hatten, that he went too far east and had to come back, that he took up a firing position.

It took nim all afternoon. And all afternoon there was fighting; and all day there was dying; and it is not possible to tell everything that happened. There was a battalion of infantry in there, to mention just one unit; and each of the men of that battalion could tell you his own story — and a different one — and each man was afraid in his own way, and brave in his own way, or cowardly in his own way.

Lt. Marshall got to the west edge of the town with three tanks and took up firing positions.

Meanwhile, the rest of Company A, two platoons of medium tanks, had gotten to Hatten, one to the west, and one to the south, to help out the infantry in the west end of town. The infantry had decided they could hold the town, and the tanks had gone back and brought up more infantry on the back decks.

Three tanks were left in town for the night, and six had been knocked out.

The first night in bloody Hatten had begun.

The second day came the order: "The attack will be continued. The infantry in the west end of town will drive to the east and clear the enemy from the town. The tanks will support."

There were the Kraut paratroopers, and the panzers; the SS and the infantry; and there were the mortars and the artillery, with the observers on the hills.

Then began the bloody day battle in the town.

The American artillery laid down preparation, an endless thundering madhouse of shells landing in Hatten. And the American infantry came out.

They tried to fight their way in the smoking, smoldering rubble; and the minute they appeared the German artillery came in. The German mortars lobbed into the streets; and the German burp guns opened up. In the bitter cold they tried to run and come to grips; and the guns cut the streets and the mortars exploded.

A German tank would move up a wreck-strewn street, climbing over the piles of rock and timbers; and an American tank would move to meet it. The German tank would stop just short of a curve and the American tank would wait, just around the corner. And so they would sit. They would try to move to get a shot without being hit — blow holes with HE through the walls of houses to fire through. And then the other would maneuver out of the way.

The two armies ground against each other.

The plateon commanders would wait for a barrage to end, duck out of their tanks, run to the infantry C.P. in the cellar of a building. Lt. Charles B. Wallace of Cincinnati, Ohio, would run with the others.

Lieutenant," the infantry commander would say, "move your tank up here, and fire on this house. Germans in there holding us up."

And Lt. Wallace would run back to his tank.

"Move up," he would say to his driver, and he would move into a position to fire. The German bazookas would open up, and the artillery start to fire again; and Wallace would fire into the house and move back from the bazookas. And the Germans in the next house would hold up the advance.

But the Germans could not move either. And the dead piled up in the streets. The dead in gray, and the dead in khaki. And the civilians, caught in the town by the fighting, killed when they tried to run down the streets.

The most vicious German counterattack came that night, just at dusk. First -- as always -- the artillery. Then the quick gray shapes of the men running; and the infantry called for artillery and the machine-guns chattered endlessly through the night. The flames of the guns streaked till the town was a living hell; and then the artillery began to land.

You could hear the shouts and the screams through the gun fire; and the screams of women trapped in the cellar of a burning house, set afire by white phosphorous.

Up to the town in the day had come a platoon of Company A, led by Lt. Sol Rael of Brooklyn, New York, and Rael had gone back. Now into this inferno, at the worst time of night, came Company C tanks, led by Capt. Persky, and you could hear his voice over the radio.

"Can't see anything. Can't see anything," he said. "Smoke is too bad." Then, as he got through the smoke and into the fire: "Christ, there are millions of them up here. They're everywhere, they're all over the place -- Johnny, John, there's one now, get him, get him....!" And his voice went off into abrupt silence.

Three C Company tanks were knocked out.

The German infantry did not get through. The counterattacks had been stopped. The infantry settled down to stopping the minor counterattacks that came all night to test us; and the tanks stayed to help them.

Earlier, supplies had been taken up by half-tracks, mortar halftracks under the command of Lt. Willis E. Harding of Lincoln, Nebraska. But now the mortars were firing all day and doing guard all night; and it was too dangerous for half-tracks anyway.

Capt. Robert C. Potts of Columbia, Ohio, sent up his supplies by light tanks.

The battalion medics -- 18 men and two officers to care for 700 odd men -- went onto the battlefield in peeps to carry out the wounded, and the peeps came back with bullet holes in the windshields; and the wounded came back in half-tracks and on tanks to the Aid Station where Capt. William R. Eaton of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, was working.

The morning of January 15, the objective was a limited attack. We were being hurt, but so was the Kraut. We were losing tanks and men; but so was he. A prisoner of war stated that more than a hundred men in his unit were killed in a single day.

The tenseness and the fighting went on. The artillery still came in its endless scream and who comp! And the small arms chattered endlessly; and the Krauts were in the next houses.

You would be on one side of a wall and the Krauts on the other; and you would try to lob hand grenades over to get them; and the infantry would set up a mortar and take off all the increments except one and try to lob shells over one house and onto the next. And the dead lying in the streets began to get on your nerves; and the tenseness of always looking down the sights, always waiting; and the artillery was always coming and you knew it was only a question of time before one landed on the house you were in. The fighting had reached such a vicious pitch that they tried to range in eight-inch howitzers on a single house, which is something like trying to hit a fly with a shotgun.

- T -

The fighting went on and on. That day and the next day and the next day and the next day and the next.

"Counterattacks in the Hatten area were beaten off today." was the way the news dispatches read. But that did not tell of the artiflery fire, and what a counterattack was. That did not tell you of the infantry staff sergeant (best damned platoon leader in the Army) in combat for months, scheduled to get to the rear at 1930 to take a physical to become a second lieutenant, and how he was killed at 1530. That did not tell you of the death and screaming, the sweating in that ice cold air and the suffering.

It did not tell of the hours on hours of endless waiting while nothing happens -- hours two hundred minutes long, and days and nights two hundred hours, waiting, waiting, till finally you wanted something to happen.

These men could tell you -- or let the official words of their citations tell you:

"Sgt. William T. Summers of Schenectady, New York, Company C, on the 18th of January at Hatten, France, at about 1400 was maneuvering his tank to get out of range of an anti-tank gun. While so engaged he saw a light tank get hit and start to burn. Summers at once went to the light tank's aid. Upon arriving he dismounted and helped evacuate the crew. The driver of the burning tank was hurt and needed first aid. Summers gave him the necessary treatment, mounted the wounded men on the back deck of his tank and rode away with him. During this entire time Sgt. Summers was entirely exposed to small arms and mortar fire falling in heavy concentrations."

"On the night of the 13th of January at Hatten, France, platoon leader, Lieutenant was wounded. S/Sgt. Pennington P. Smith of Shreveport, Louisiana, and Pfc. James Barbera of Brooklyn, New York, both of Company A, dismounted from their tank into intense enemy fire and shielded the body of the Lieutenant with their own bodies while S/Sgt. Smith administered first aid. When it was necessary for someone to ride the rear deck of the tank to give the officer protection and keep him from falling off, Pfc. Barbera volunteered. Pfc. Barbera not only kept up the first aid necessary on the trip, but shielded the officer with his own body against intense small arms, mortar, and artillery fire; and the Lieutenant was successfully evacuated. S/Sgt. Smith returned to his plation and assumed command, reorganized it and made a personal foot reconaissance to discover the best route for his tanks. In the course of this reconnaissance he directed the evacuation of an infantry platoon sergeant. All this was accomplished under intense small arms and morter fire. The success of the mission was largely due to the cool leadership of S/Sgt. Smith."

"On the 17th of January, at Hatten, France, Tec 4 John Pitcher of Altoona, Pennsylvania, and Pfc. Richard L. Duvall of McBain, Michigan, both of Company D, were members of the crew of a light tank that was hit by an 88 mm gun. The tank burst into flames. Under small arms fire, Tec 4 Pitcher and Pfc. Duvall had dismounted from the flaming vehicle. When they saw their other two members of the crew did not come out, the two men returned to the

tank and pulled the wounded gunner, who was aflame, from the tank. Pfc. Duvall rolled the burning body on the ground and laid on the blazing clothes to extinguish the flames. They could not evacuate the fourth man. Successful in putting out the fire, the men hailed a passing medium tank and placed the gunner on the rear deck and then laid with him under small arms fire until the safety of an aid station was reached. The gunner has a fifty-fifty chance to live as a result of their action. These men showed unusual courage in the face of great personal danger in helping their comrades in arms."

These are the stories of three men. But they are not enough. Lt. Earl A. Allgrim of Buffalo, New York, and S/Sgt. William R. Fadda of San Leandro, California, both of Headquarters Company, could tell you how they went out onto the battlefield under artillery and small arms fire to evacuate a tank.

Sgt. Stephen B. Ratchuck Jr., of Buffalo, New York, and Tec 4 Edgar Mongo, of Utica, New York, both of Company B, could tell you how they walk don foot through artillery fire again and again to fix tank radios.

Lt. Eugene W. Marsack of Grosspoint, Michigan, and Pvt. Henry J. Erickson of Brookly, New York, both of Company D, could tell you how, on the night of the 17th of January, the Krauts hit a half-track loaded with wounded men, and how they dismounted from their tank in all that fire and hitched the half-track to the tank and towed it to safety.

There are a thousand stories. A story for every man. And some of the men are living. And many of them are dead. And perhaps not even all those stories would tell the story of Hatten.

The battle went on.

That day and the next day and the next day and the next day and

Company B came up from Drusenheim, short of tanks from its last fight, Capt. Thomas C. Beaty of Wichita Falls, Texas, in command. This was not the 15th; and that night Lt. John L. Perkins of Amsterdam, New York, was killed outside his tank at Hatten. We found a letter he had written to his wife, in pencil, and not mailed. So we stamped it and sent it out.

Lt. Cullis V. Sears of Lumber City, Georgia, went up into that town

had been wounded; and Lt. Rael was back in the hospital. Company B, low on tanks to start, had lost Lt. Perkins.

Jones of Elcho, Wisconsin, wounded. Lt. Sprague, missing. Lt. Sidney Hack of Brooklyn, New York, wounded. Company C had one officer left.

The Germans were still held in Hatten, though.

If you went up to the gentle rolling field south of Hatten, you could see the burned out hulls of American tanks scattered there. You could see the German tanks there, too; and if you wanted to fight your way into the streets of Hatten, you could see more burned out wrecks there. American -- and German.

The Seventh Army decided to pull back. It was only a short distance, but the papers told how the Seventh Army had out-foxed von Rundstedt; how it had fought and fought his counterattacks until the very last second; and then when he put all his weight behind his final punch — the Seventh had pulled back, and he was swinging at air, and the Seventh was waiting for him again as he stumbled off his balance.

We moved get in the 20th

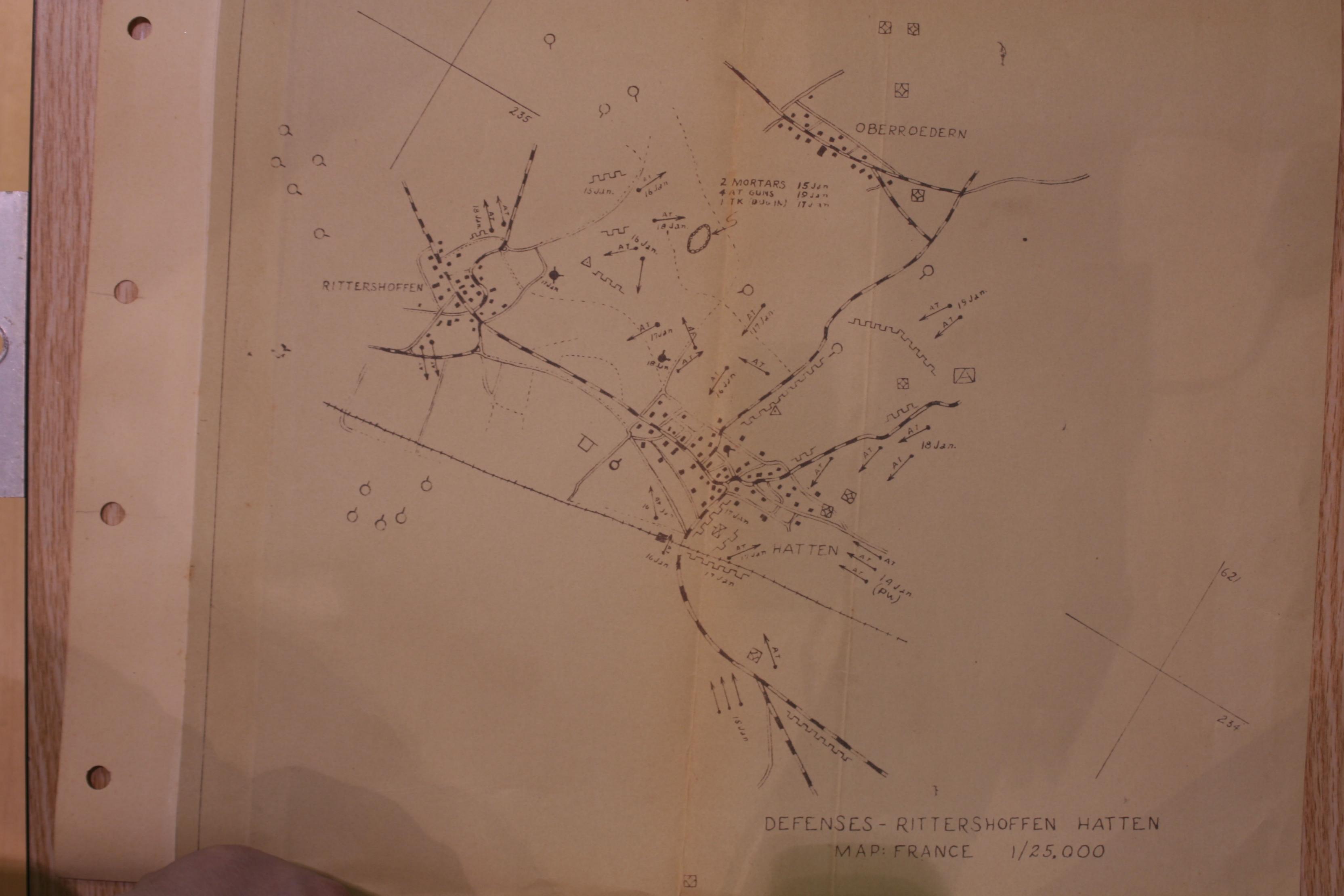
We moved back, to the south and the west, and left Hatten behind us. We moved out in the night, and the tanks stayed to cover the infantry; and the line of the battalion -- not as long, now crawled slowly down the black roads.

Behind was Hatten, and behind was the fighting. Behind were the endless artillery barrages and the waiting. Behind were the fires and the dead. Behind was the broken German offensive.

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Esther







# RITTERSHOFFEN HATTEN



"At Hatten and Rittershoffen, the

14th Armored Division fought one of the

greatest defensive hattless of the was."

Pacob L. Devers

general U.S. Army

COLONEL MAURICE K. KURTZ

Hg 14th 17. D. arty. 12 July 1945. Pursuant to verbal authority of C.G. 14th. and all portions leited as unelawified. Tokkarty comde. WASSERBURG, GERMANY 12 JULY, 1945

#### FIELD ABILLLERY SUPPOBI

#### HATTEN - RITTERSHOFFEN

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Index.

Seventh Army Official History of Action at Hatten.

. Summary of Losses -- Men, Vehicles, Ammunition.

5. Chart -- German Main Routes of Supply.

6. The Attack Plan, 11 January. 7. The Attack Plan, 12 January.

8. The Attack Plan, 15 January.

O. Chart of Vehicle Losses, 11-20 January.

11. Sketch of Sectors of Observation and Location of Linkson Officers.

12. Wire Communications Net.

15. Fire Capabilities of Artillery in Direct Support.

14. Location of Known German Defenses.

15. Artillery Concentrations Fired 9-20 January.

16. Daily Plots of Artillary Ammunition Expenditures for the Period 9-20 January.

17. Graph of Rate of Expenditure Versus Time, 0-20 January.

18. Summary of Artillery Missions Fired by 14th AD.

19. Map.

TO ZNITUI HEADQUARTERS 14TH ARMORED DIVISION ARTILLERY APO 446 15 February 1945 Brochure "Field Artillery in the Battles SUBJECT: of Rittershoffen and Hatten." The Company of the Co Commanding General, 14th Armored Division. 1. The enclosed brochure entitled "Field Artillery in the Battles of Rittershoffen and Hatten" has been compiled by Headquarters, 14th Armored Division Artillery. and endeavors to show graphically and in writing, the artillery participation during that very crucial campaign from the 9th to the 20th of January. The brochure includes a short day by day history of the major elements of the VI Corps actually engaged in those battles during the period concerned, and the history is supplemented by (1) a graph showing hourly expenditures of light, medium. and heavy caliber ammunition and the resultant daily totals. (2) sketches of the plans for attack of elements of the 14th Armored Division on 11 and 13 Jan. (3) a "fire-capability" diagram of all the artillery involved. (4) a wire traffic diagram of telephonic communications. (5) an overlay showing fields of observation, and liaison, as established by the 14th Armored Division Artillery. and (6) sketches of areas covered by artillery and the 12, 12, amount of artillery that fell in each area, a by day, b throughout the period. 2. Necessarily, information shown is not complete. However all available sources were used, and to the bost knowledge of this Headquarters, all data are accurate. On the sketches, those areas that are shown as having been fired on by friendly artillery are 200 yard concentrations indicating the centers of impact only of numerous targets that were undertaken within the concentration. The fire of tanks, mortars, tank destroyers, and the Cannon Co of the 242nd Infantry is not shown. 3. This Headquarters wishes to acknowledge and express its thanks for the information and data furnished it by the Division Headquarters, Combat Commands, and artillery battalions of the 14th Armored Division, the 79th Division Artillery, the 6th FA Group, 634th FA Bn, 36th FA Bn, 698th FA Bn, 194th FA Bn, and the 72d AAA Gun Bn, all operating under VI Corps Artillery. 050 Memo et may 1992 0AK enge 12/4/19

4. This document has not only been compiled to portray the very active part artillery played in the battles of Hatten and Rittershoffen, but also to express the Artillery's heartfelt admiration for the splendid work of each and every infantry man and tanker in the face of extraordinarily difficult fighting and some of the enemy's best troops, not the least of which were the 21st Panzer Division, the Eth Panzer Grenadier Division, and the 7th Para Division. It is sincerely hoped that the spirit of cooperation and understanding that exists between all arms of this division may continue and, if possible, increase during the days to come. For the Commanding Officer: Carl C. NEELY,

Lt. Col., F.A., Executive Officer.

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# FIELD ARTILLERY SUPPORT. HATTEN - RITTERSHOFFEN

T Index.

II History of Battle.

III Charts - CCA Plan of Attack.
- Division Plan of Attack.

IV Chart - Liaison and FO Location, Observation and Dead Space.

v Wire Traffic Diagram.

VI Fire Capabilities.

VII Artillery Coverage - Daily and Composit.

VIII Time Schedule - Ammunition Expended.

IX Summary and Type of Missions - 14th Armd Div Arty.

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#### TROOP LIST

American Forces engaged in the Hatten-Rittershoffen Battle sen the 8th and 20th of January 1945 were as follows:

#### Air Forces:

12th Tactical Air

# 42d Infantry Division:

1st Bn, 242d Infantry 2d Bn, 242d Infantry

## 79th Infantry Division:

515th Infantry Regiment 510th Field Artillery Battalion 511th Field Artillery Battalion 512th Field Artillery Battalion (155mm How)

#### 14th Armored Division:

94th Reconnaissance Squadron
19th Armored Infantry Battalion
62d Armored Infantry Battalion
68th Armored Infantry Battalion
25th Tank Battalion
47th Tank Battalion
48th Tank Battalion
125th Armored Engineer Battalion
499th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
500th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
Hq, Combat Command; A and B and Reserve
Hq, 14th Armored Division Artillery

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#### - TALTERIAL

# HEADQUARTERS 14TH ARMORED DIVISION ARTILLERY APO 446

25 February 1945

#### FIELD ARTILLERY IN THE BATTLES OF RITTERSHOFFEN AND HATTEN

TERRAIN:

Early January 1945 found the 79th Infantry Division, reinforced by elements of the 42nd Infantry Division, holding defensive positions generally along the old Maginot line from Birlenbach (R1041), Hunspach, Oberroedern, Hatten, Forstfeld (R2128), then generally along a line to the SW on the W bank of the Rhine River. The Division sector on the northern portion of the front contained bare, rolling hills. Defensive positions were sited behind rivers and had excellent fields of fire. The sector of the front between Hatten and Forstfeld ran thru the Haguenau Forest in very flat, heavily wooded country. Little or no observation was possible in the forest areas. SW of Forstfeld, the line ran thru low, level country, intersperced with small patches of timber. All defenses E of the Haguenau Forest were dominated by observation from the high ground E of the Rhine River. The road nets in the Division sector converged in general at three places; Soultz (R1037), Haguenau (R0324), and Bischwiller (RO918). The Haguenau Forest afforded few mouns of communication between the troops on its SE side and those on its N. The towns of Hatten and Rittershoffen lay on the S slope of a ridge between the N edge of the Haguenau forest and the Seltzbach River. The Haguenau Forest proper, extends to the of Markey werry depolations to be laveled to be straighted

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N to the Seltzbach River, and approximately 2000 yds E of The bare, open slopes on the N of Hatten and S of the Sletzbach River afford no concealment from hostile observation in Stundwiller (R1836), and Buhl (R1935). A stream flowing E from Rittershoffen, thru Hatten, and thence E into the Haguenau Forest, formed a valley defiladed from all obervation N and W of Rittershoffen. This stream played an important part in the battles of Hatten and Rittershoffen in that it afforded a concealed route for movement of enemy troops. The high ground in the vicinity of Hohwiller (R1236), dominated all avenues of approach to the N or W from Soults, and was the critical tactical terrain feature in the immediate area. In order to make a detailed study of the artillery action in the vicinity of Hatten and Rittershoffen, a 4000 meter square with the lower left coordinates 1532, and the upper right coordinates 1936 was selected.

## Weather: he higher influences BN of Chaptersoners (21636), on

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The weather during the period Jan 9 - 20 Incl, was typical Aleation sinter weather, marked with snow, below-freezing weather, high winds, and fog. During the period Jan 9--20, operations were frequently hampered by an almost complete lack of visibility. Show on the roads made movement of armored equipment extremely difficult. Cross-country operations were, however, practicable, and over nearly the entire battlefield, the ground was frozen to such a depth that tanks could operate without danger of being stuck.

# Maginot Line Fortifications:

Large concrete pillboxes located just to the E, N, and NE of Hatten, were designed to be invulnerable to artillery fire,

containing heavy concrete and earth protection for numberous gallerys. Smaller Maginot Line fortifications existed at the southern exit of Hatten, at the E and of a RR out about 500 yds E from the S entrance to Hatten, and at a RJ approx.

1200 yds SE of Hatten. These fortifications were the typical small machine gun and AT gun emplacements. These fortifications were overrum by the Germans during the course of the battle and were used as shelters for personnel, material, and AT gun locations. They proved very difficult to neutralise. The larger fortifications remained in use even though mpeatedly attacked by 8" and 240mm hows.

#### Events Prior to 9 January 1945:

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In early January 1945, it became known that the 21st Panzer Division had moved to the vicinity of Wissembourg. Elements of this Division had probed the front of the 79th Infantry Division and had made a small scale attack on the front of the 313th Infantry NW of Oberroedern (R1636), on the 6th of January. CC"A" of the 14th Armored Division, consisting of the 48th Tank Bn, the 68th AIB, 500th AFA Bn, plus attachments of Reconnaissance (C Troop 94th), Engineers, Signal, and Medical Troops, was moved to the vicinity of Surbourg (R0834), where it was attached to Task Force Wahl of the 79th Infantry Division. It was given the mission of repulsing any German armored attacks from the N, with special attention to attacks on the direction Wissembourg, Ingolsheim, and Soultz. The 48th Tank Bn placed one medium Co in the vicinity of Soultz attached to 68th AIB, and held the remainder of the Bn in Surbourg. The 500th AFA Bn occupied positions

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in the vicinity of Reimerswillery (R108349), and was given the mission of reinforcing the fires of the 79th Division Artillery and of being prepared to support GG"A" if committed.

The 242nd Infantry, a part of the 42nd Division, held the portion of the line S of Seltzbach River and E of Hatten. This unit was lightly reinforced by TD's and held the front on the key terrain N of the Haguenau Forest. The probing attacks continued from day today by the Germans, had developed a weakness in this sector which covered the most direct, and least-defensible route to the high ground in the vicinity of Hohwiller. The 21st Panzer Division launched a heavy armored attack against the 3rd Bn of the 313th Infantry in the Aschbach-Standwiller area, just N of the Sletzbach Rivor. A sizeable penetration was made in the front of the 313th Infantry. The line was restored to its original positions by a C/A which inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. This attack revealed the location of the enemy's armor and the dispositions of CC"A" were altered to meet the threat which might develop from E. Four companies of the 48th Tank Bn were moved to postitions on the high ground vicinity of Leiterswiller, and the 500th AFA Bn made the necessary changes in fields of fire to support any attack to the E or NE.

Oranadier Division made its initial appearance by launching a sudden, violent attack from the woods E of Hatten against the sector of the 1st Bn of the 242nd Infantry. The major, portion of the front line elements of this Bn were surrounded, and armored reconnaissance units were pushed W towards Hatten.

9 January 1945:

On the morning of 9 January 1945, the 2nd Bn of the

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2/2nd Infantry was ordered into Hatten with a mission of restoring the MLR. During the night of 3 - 9 January 1945. enery forces were active and infiltrated into and around the town of Hatten. At 1100, A-48 moved into an assembly position just W of Rittershoffen. At 1215, A-48 received orders to return to Kuhlendorf, arriving there about 1245. At 1330, A-48 received orders to move immediately to Rittershoffen to repel a German tank attack sweeping towards Rittershoffen from Hatten, N of the RR. The remainder of the 48th Tank Bn moved to an assembly area in Niederbetschdorf. The Bn closed in its assembly area at approximately 1500. A-48 arrived in Rittershoffen just in time to place a platoon E of Rittershoffen, S of the Rittershoffen-Hatten Rd, one platoon N of the Rd and one platoon S and W of Rittershoffen. The platoon (1-A-48), S and E of Rittershoffen allowed the German tanks to come within 600 yds S of their position where they and the assault gun platoon of E-94 opened fire, kmocking out in a half-hour period 8 German tanks, and I self-propelled gun. The Germans had also attempted to attack Rittershoffen from the N from Hatten, but upon destruction of the attack on the S, turned around and fled to the E of Hatten. This action was completed by 1630. At 1800, A-48 attacked to restore the old MIR, one platoon on the S and one on the N, in conjunction with an attack launched by a Bn of the 242nd Infantry. C-48 remained in a position E of Rittershoffen & support A-48. The tanks reached positions by 1840 on both N and S of Hatton that covered all routes of approach into Hatten. The Bn of the 242nd Infantry moved into Hatten only 300 yds. A-48 was relieved by two platoons of the 827th TD Bn at 0200 10 January 1945, "G" and "F" Companies, 2nd Bn 315th Infantry,

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moved into Hatten around Ol00 10 January 1945 in the western 200 yds of town.

The day's artillery activity reveals that the bulk of the fire was placed on routes of approach from SE towards Hatten, on snemy troops and on hostile positions in the center of Hatten. The 2nd Bu 242nd Infantry failed to clear the town and was badly mauled during the days action. At night, friendly Infantry held the SW portion of Hatten, and two plateons of "A" Go 48th Tk Bu outposted the NE and SE edges of Hatten.

The 10th of January 1945 saw the arrival in the Rittershoffen area of 3rd Bn 315th Infantry. At 0900, A-48 and F-315 started to attack S around Hatten to restore the MIR, but a German tank and Infantry attack that jumped off at 0900 around the N end of Hatten forced A-48 back to the E of Rittershoffen and F-315 back into their old positions in Hatten. This attack was repulsed definitely by 1200. Ascound attack was planned in which the 48th Tk Bn, operating with the 2nd Bn of 315th Infantry was to attack, clear Hatten, and restore the MIR. In this operation, "B" Co of the 48th Tk Bn was to attack towards Hatten from the S, generally along the RR, then N on the E edge of Hatten. "C" Co to attack NE, S of the Seltzbach River, while "AC Co, with the Bn reserve, remained in the vicinity of Rittershoffen.

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During the night, German forces had infiltrated reinforcements into the Hatten area and had succeeded in emplacing AT guns and heavy tanks in concleased positions in and around Hatten. Initally, the attack was a success and

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the 2nd Bn 315th Infantry went into the western portion of
Hatten. "C" Co of the 48th suffered heavily from AT fire coming from guns emplaced in buildings or near buildings in Hatten,
and at 1800 in the afternoon, was ordered to withdraw. The
relief of elements of the 242nd Infantry remaining in Hatten
was ordered for the night of the 10th and 11th. At dark,
the tank Bn reorganized on the high ground NW of Rittershoffen.

The two plateons of tanks which had been outposting the NE portion of Hatten on the night of 9 - 10 was relieved by 8 TD's manned by colored troops, and the two plateons were withdrawn at about 0300 to Rittershoffen. During the morning, at 0850, the CO of the North TD plateon was killed and the TD's withdrew their outposts into the town, joining elements of the 315th Infantry, where they were employed as armored pillboxes throughout the remainder of the action. After the withdrawal of "B" and "C" of the 48th from the attack on Hatten, C-48 was left E of Rittershoffen with 3rd Bn 315th to defend Rittershoffen.

On this date, Rittershoffen was lightly defended by elements of the 315th Infantry, the bulk of the defending troops being in the town. During the night of 10 - 11

Jamuary, German forces infiltrating by covered routes, using the northern street of Hatten and draw leading W into Rittershoffen, succeeded in occupying the northern and eastern portions of Rittershoffen, getting in rear of "G" Co 48th Tank Bn, outposting the E approaches to Rittershoffen.

The artillery action on this date as well as on the 9th was directed largely towards hostile routes of approach, and

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troop concentrations. The action during the day was largely of a piece-meal nature, and was not well coordinated with the artillery effort.

# 11 January 1945:

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At approximately 0630, "C" Co of the 48th Tank Bn, on outpost, was attacked by a Co of German tanks and what was estimated to be about 300 Infantry, supported by heavy artillery concentrations. This attack succeeded in driving the Infantry and tanks to the western side of Rittershoffen. By 0730, "C" Co 48th Tank Bn lost 12 med tanks.

Early morning of the 11th found the 3rd Bn 315th Inf
pinned down in the SW portion of Rittershoffen, the 2nd Bn of
the 315th Infantry with some survivors of the 242nd occupying
the western portion of Hatten. The enemy had succeeded in
reinforcing his troops and bringing into the area a considerable
number of AT guns which were skillfully emplaced during the
night.

It was decided to commit CC"A" as a unit in an attack to start at 1545 with a mission as follows: "68th AIB (-), plus "A" Co 48th Tank Bn, will attack E from R150334, and capture the NE end of Rittershoffen, push E and capture the N side of Hatten, then occupy the MIR E of Hatten. The 48th Tank Bn (-), plus a Co of 68th AIB, will attack to E, capture S end of town of Rittershoffen, and push on to E, South of the Rittershoffen-Hatten Rd, assist the 68th and 315th Inf in the capture of Hatten, and occupy MIR. Time of attack on Hatten to be coordinated with 315th Inf."

The 68th Inf (reinforced), attacked at 1545, and encountered very heavy artillery, mortar, and 8/A fire and

by darkness had reached a line approximately 500 yds NW of Rittershoffen, where they dug in for the night.

At 1615, the 48th launched a tank attack which made little progress in the face of strong enemy AT fire coming from the woods and the cemetery in the SE part of Rittershoffen.

At 1100, Division Artillery Commander, 14th Armored Division, was given instructions by VI Corps Artillery Officer to move the 499th and 501st AFA to the vicinity of Soultz (R0938), with a mission of reinforcing the fires of the 79th Infantry Division and to support C/A's by the 14th Armored Division either to the N or E. Early in the afternmon, the Division Artillery CP was established in Kutzenhausen (R0337), and the 499th AFA Bn in Soults. The projected move for the 501st AFA Bn was cancelled, and this Bn was attached to the 45th Infantry Division where it was urgently needed to support action in the vicinity of Reipertswiller (Q8037). This attachment became effective at 1400. The 499th AFA Bn completed displacement from the Niederbronn Les Bains area (Q9339), to positions just S and W of Soultz, closing in the new area at 2200. Mission of 499th was "reinforcing fires of 312th FA Bn." The remainder of the 14th Armored Division moved on the afternnon and the night of the 11th to assembly area in the Soults-Surbourg BYOR. FOR MINI STREET, STREET,

# 12 Jamesy 1945:

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By 0630, CC"B" of the 14th Armored Division, consisting of 25th Tank Bn, 62nd AIB, plus attachments of Engineers and Signal troops, was moving to attack positions in vicinity of

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Hohwiller (R1237), with mission of attacking on order in column of Bas. The leading Ba was to seize Hatten; the second Bn to cut the Rd E of Hatten and restore the MLR, remaining thereon until relieved by elements of the 79th Division. At the same time, CC"R" of the 14th Armored Division, consisting of 47th Tank Bn (-B Co), the 19th AIB, 94th Ren Sq (-Co A & C), was moving to assembly area in vicinity of Hoelschloch (R0635), with mission of reinforcing CC"B", or of attacking on short notice.

14th Armored Division Artillery assumed control of the 499th and 500th AFA Bns and completed its wire communication system to support any projected attack. During the day, the 68th AIB, and the 3rd Bn 315th Infantry succeeded in clearing the SW part of Rittershoffen. The fighting was bitter, invalving house to house fighting under intense artillery and S/A fire. Tank attacks to clear the SE edge of town were ineffective. h Ron Do Loop detechnents, ostablish Ron serven

CC"B", attacking at 1130 advanced elements of 25th Tank Bn and 62nd Infantry across the open ground S of the Seltsbach River to a position generally N of the W edge of Hatten. They were, however, unable to occupy the ridge N of town, and after the loss of 5 tanks, withdrew to their original L/D, on the Rittershoffen-Leiterswiller Rd. The enemy, well dug in, supplied with numerous weapons, and supported by what was estimated to be approximately 1500 gds of artillery fire. succeeded in maintaining his position along the ridge N of HATTEN. TY STREET WAS DO NOT STREET, BY NOW AND ASSESSED AND

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At 2200, the Commanding General, 14th Armored Division, issued orders for a coordinated attack for the 13th of January. In substance, this order was as follows:

"a. CC"A" to continue the attack at daylight 13 Jan 45, clear Rittershoffen, after clearing town, assist CC"R", reestablish VI Corps MIR, hold MIR until relieved by 79th Division.

b. GG"B" attack the N edge of Rittershoffen and Hatten by fire, using all available tank and assault guns. Attack at daylight, coordinating fires with movements of CC"A" and CC"R"; protect Division left, North, flank.

c. CC"R" assemble in vicinity Niederbetchdorf (R1333), prior to daylight. Under cover of friendly smoke screen, seize Hatten, reestablish Corps MIR, hold MIR untol relieved by 79th Division; protect right, South, flank of the Division.

d. 94th Ron Sq less detachments, establish Ron screen along the general line Soultz-Moffen (R1536)

e. Division Artillery general support."

At this stage in the operation in the vicinity of Hatten, a peculiar intermingling of troops existed, elements of 242nd Infantry, 315th Infantry, tanks and TD's were in town. Elements of the 242nd Inf and 315th Inf were being supported by FA belonging to the 79th Division. The 14th Armored Division was being committed as a unit. Artillery support being provided by the 500th and 499th AFA Bas. Corps artillery support was being provided by the 6th FA Group and THE RESERVE THE RESERVE AND ADDRESS OF THE PARTY OF THE RESERVE AND ADDRESS OF THE PARTY OF THE

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the 17th FA Group. Fires in certain areas, especially those along the front of the 315th Infantry in Rittershoffen were to be cleared through the 79th Division Artillery.

Fires in front of elements of the 14th Armored Division were to be cleared through 14th Armored Division. This intermingling of troops called for the utmost cooperation and closest type of coordination in preparing fire plans.

Hostile observation in Aschbach, Buhl, and Stundwiller, and Hill 160 (R179342), dominated the battlefield.

The fire plan for the days attack involved the use of 8" hows in the close support of troops engaged in Hatten.

A preparation fire of 30 min was to be fired by med and heavy artillery on known hostile positions in the vicinity of Niederbronn, Trimbach, Niederseebach, Oberseebach, Cleeburg, and Ingolsheim. Interdiction fire was arranged for on Salmbach, a town on the enemy's main supply route.

WHT hour was set at 0800 13 Jan.

The night was foggy and cold, the roads covered with ice, and movements to the attack positions were accomplished under most difficult circumstances.

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Early morning of the 13th revealed a heavy gound hame.

FO's were unable to see targets and visibility up until

noon varied from 100 to 200 yards. Due to this atmospheric

condition, "H" hour was changed from 0800 to 1015 for CCA

and 1130 for CC"B".

The attack by CC"A" jumped off at 1015 under cover of intense friendly artillery fire placed on the SE portion of

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Rittershoffen. The 3rd Bn of the 315th and 48th Tank Bn were able to completely occupy several more houses in the S part of town just E of the church in Rittershoffen. The 48th Tank Bn moved 7 medium tanks and 5 light tanks into a position N of the RR and between Rittershoffen-Hatten Rd E of Rittershoffen. CCR attacked at 0800A across the open ground between the Haguenau Forest and Rittershoffen under the cover of friendly smoke screen, and by mid-day, reestablished contact with elements of 242nd and 315th Infantry which were cut off in Hatten. The tank attack generally along the RR towards Hatten was able to reach the south part of town about 1100. The 19th Infantry failed to reach town, however, the attack was reorganized in the aftermoon and in an advance directly into the W part of town, the 47th Tank Bn carried the 19th AIB into town by dark while a second assault was made on the South. Heavy artillery concentrations along the SE portion of Hatten effectively silenced hostile weapons and made it possible for tanks to enter the main N-S street from the S. Shell craters in the road however, made the road impassable, and after the loss of 2 tanks from bazooka fire, the tank attack was diverted to the W about 200 yds where a trail entered the town and the tanks moved into the town by dark. This attack cleared the enemy from the northern sector of Hatten, and left the enemy in control only of the ME portion of the town.

Although CC"B" had been directed to attack by fire only,

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the lack of progress of the forces attacking in Rittershoffen caused elements of CCB to be committed in an attack
on Hatten from the N. Three separate attempts were made
to reach Hatten, the deepest penetration being made in the
vicinity of R183347. Elements of CCB were forced to withdraw
in each case by heavy AT gun fire, and intense S/A, artillery,
and mortar fire.

Hatten on the Buhl-Hatten Rd. The 312th FA Bn (med) took
the bridge at R189349 under fire, but was unable to destroy
the bridge due to poor visibility. During the day, the Air
Force took advantage of clearing weather conditions and made
an attempt to drop supplies to the 315th Infantry surrounded
in Hatten.

At 1550, the 499th AFA Bn marked the location of the town of Buhl, using red smoke in order to guide dive bombers in a strafing mission on the town.

at 2115, enemy troops launched a very powerful C/A, using armor, flame throwers carried on tanks, and Infantry. This attack forced our tanks towithdraw from their positions on the Rittershoofen-Hatten road and regained the E edge of Hatten, and approximately half of the N edge of Hatten.

At 2325, the enemy made a second C/A on Rittershoffen, using similar equipment. This attack was effectively broken up by artillery fire, but our Infantry were driven from town before the attack was stopped.

# 14 Jamesry 1945:

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The early morning hours of the 14th of Jamuary were

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characterized by lack of hostile activity. Clearing air conditions brought an increase in the number of observed missions. At approximately 1400, a very heavy enemy attack launched from the N and E portions of Rittershoffen was stopped by artillery fire, and the fighting in Rittershoffen reverted to the use of demolition agencies, flame throwers, and bazookas, in an effort to win a house at a time from the enemy. Air observers had one of their best days during the operations. One observer discovered and distroyed a gun position which was camouflaged to represent a manure pile.

8" hows were adjusted on a large Maginot Line pillbox at 18003365, and after 15 rds succeeded in destroying it.

Numerous enemy targets consisting of small groups of Infantry were fired upon during the day.

At 2300, an attempt by the enemy to attack Hatten from the E was broken up by artillery fire.

At 2330, a very determined attack on the N portion of
Hatten was likewise stopped by artillery fire. However, enemy
succeeded ingaining control of the buildings on the N side
of the N Rd in Hatten, forcing our troops to withdraw from
that portion of the town. The fighting on this date, in
both Hatten and Rittershoffen was at very close quarters,
and on numerous occasions, heavy defensive artillery fires
were placed on enemy troops in buildings just across the
street from our own troops. It will be noted from the sketch
showing the concentration of fires on the 14th of January,
that the preponderence of the fires delivered fell within
the N and E edge of both Rittershoffen and Hatten.

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Our troops were unable to dislodge the enemy from
the churches in Rittershoffen and Hatten, and the enemy
made good use of the observation obtained from these
positions to bring effective fire on our troops.

At 1215, the 6th FA Group ordered an M12 (155mm Sp Gun) to report to the CP of CCR. This gun was picked up later in the afternoon by an observer of the 310th FA and moved into Rittershoffen where it succeeded in firing 3 rds at very short range into the church. Hostile fire from heavy weapons and AT guns forced the withdrawal of this piece after the 3rd rd and no material damage was done. Failure to make the necessary arrangments for close supporting and covering fires resulted in the failure to accomplish the mission. Friendly troops occupying buildings within 50 yds of this church refused to clear fires of heavy weapons such as 8" hows on the church and felt that to withdraw far enough to permit fire of heavy weapons on the church would merely result in the loss of that much ground. Stone structures such as this proved to be unprofitable targets for 105mm how fire. Darkness found a considerable portion of both Rittershoffen and Hatten on fire. Air observers reported Buhl burning at dark as a result of bombing. After dark, 32 rds of 105mm WP were fired into the SE portion of Hatten in an attempt to burn that portion of town and prevent enemy occupation of buildings not on fire.

15 January 1945:

At 0040, a small C/A on Hatten, support ed by 5 tanks was

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broken up by fire from medium artillery. At 0600, another C/A in Hatten supported by flame throwers and tanks carrying flame throwers, starting in the eastern edge of Hatten, was broken up by artillery fire.

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At 1135, a small attack launched from the northern part of Hatten towards the buildings in the southern part of town was broken up by artillery fire. At 1430, the Liaison Officer with CCR requested supporting fires for an attack to be launched at 1500. These fires were worked out and the 15 min preparation was fired between 1500 and 1515. Units of artillery of the 14th Armored Division and 6th FA Group participating. This attack was made in an effort to regain ground lost during the previous day. This attack, however, failed in its purpose, as just as it was initiated, a strong German attack estimated at Bn strength was launched from the E of Hatten. The preparation fires scheduled to follow were continued as defensive fires, and no material change in positions resulted. By 1640, these fires were lifted. At 1720, enemy pressure in Hatten was again increased and buildings were being burned. Friendly med tanks moved into the town where they joined elements of CCR and a new attempt was made to advance to the E in Hatten as far as the 18 grid line. Again, just as this attack was launched, a hostile C/A was launched from the NE. This C/A was broken up by artillery fire and no material change in troop dispositions followed.

At 1800, the artillery was advaised that the ammunition

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situation was critical and that drastic reductions must be made in ammunition expenditures, that every effort should be made to hold expenditures below 30 rds per gun per day for 105mm and 180 rds per day per Bn for 155 how. 42/9 {240 how.

The evening, after dark, remained relatively quiet, bright moonlight and snow-covered ground to fire observed to head pafer with adorr with the night. the atmosphere cleared, and observers took advantage of during the night.

The first jet-propelled German plane seen in this area dropped a bomb approximately 100 yds NE of "B" Btry, 499th position with no damage resulting. 16 January 1945s

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line.

At 0115, in the morning, a request was made for an artillery observer to accompany a patrol to penetrate the hostile lines immediately N of Rittershoffen and establish an OP in an abandoned tunnel. An NCO observer was supplied and remained with the patrol and observed hostile activities in the northern edge of Rittershoffen until 0440, when the patrol returned. Based on the report of this observer, it was decided an attempt would be made to establish a permanent OP in the same location the next night. This point afforded observation across one of the main routes of approach from the E into Rittershoffen, and was considered essential from an artillery point of view. This patrol also reported that the enemy had received a number of tanks as reinforcements in Rittershoffen during the night. At 0910 in the morning, DITTERNATION OF THE ADMINISTRAL AND RESIDENCE DATE OF THE PARTY NAME OF TAXABLE

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troops of CCA made request for an 8" how to be ready to fire on the church in Rittershoffen and demolish it between 1200 and 1300. Arrangements were made to fulfill this (77,500) request but the troops in the immediate vicinity of the church refused to permit this fire, so this mission was not accomplished.

Intermittently during the morning, enemy mortars fired smoke concentrations in the central part of Hatten, evidently in attempt to screen some movement. Air OP's attempting to find out what was going on behind the smoke screen were unable to determine what the nature of the enemy activity was because of very poor observing conditions.

At 1142, the church steeple in Hatten was observed to fall, believed to have been the result of continued artillery fire in that vicinity.

At 1231, a small C/A starting in the N part of Hatten was broken up by artillery fire.

At 1245, a second request was made for defensive fires in the northern portions of Hatten.

At 1415, a platoon of tanks and a platoon of Infantry were ordered to attack at 1500 to the SE and take the woods on the N end of Rittershoffen. The artillery support for this attack was worked out.

At 1445, a request was received from the Air Force to mark Trimbach with 2 rds of smoke for a bombing mission. This was fired by 634th FA Bn.

At 1900, the attack to seize the woods in the N end of Rittershoffen was abandoned with no ground having been gained.

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In general, the days activity was that of bitter house to
house fighting accompanied by heavy concentrations of arty
fire on close-in targets. A few observed missions were
fired during the day against small groups of enemy troops
and vehicles.

At 2320, heavy vehicular traffic was noted in the area N of Hatten. This appeared to confirm a PW report that a relief of troops in Hatten was taking place. Heavy harrassing fire program was initiated and maintained throughout the night.

# 17 January 1945:

Heavy vehicular traffic on the roads N of Hatten and on the northern Rd in Hatten continued in spite of harrassing fires. Several TOT's were organized and fired, apparently with good effect, as a marked decrease in vehicular traffic was noted.

moving from the NE into Hatten which was being heavily shelled by German artillery. At 0855, in the morning, a very heavy hostile C/A was launched against the troops in the SW portion of Hatten. Artillery observers in Hatten were forced to abandon their radios and take cover in cellars for protection. At 0914, the C/A from the NE was reinforced by an attack supported by Infantry and tanks which emerged from the woods E of Hatten. All available artillery was brought into action and by 1000 the C/A was effectively broken up.

At 1120, in the morning, friendly tanks under a covering

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screen of time fire attempted to move E along the RR and then
to the NE into Hatten. This attack made good progress
initially, but was broken up by hostile AT fire coming from
SE of Hatten.

(Tack force Wahl)

early in the morning against the N edge of Rittershoffen.

This attack was not supported initially by artillery fire and the Co was not heard from until 1215 when it reported it was able to get most of its troops into the town. Two survivors of this Co were found later in the day, the rest of the Co disappeared.

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At 1230, CCR reported that the tanks attacking in the vicinity of RR S of Hatten had outrun Infantry support and it was hoped that they could continue on to the E, then N, and cut the East-West Rd to Buhl. This attack apparently gaining some success, was being supported by the tanks and Infantry in Hatten in a coordinated effort to clear out the W portion of the town and regain ground lost in the last 2 days. It was closely supported by observed fire, and it has been estimated that at least 200 enemy were killed, and about 100 yds of the town were regained. This attack was stopped after the loss of 3 tanks at about 1410. Our troops were then in possession of an area approximately 100 yds N and S and 400 yds E and W in the SW portion of Hatten.

In an attempt to relieve the situation in Rittershoffen, a coordinated attack was organized for 1400. This consisted of an attack from the NW by one Co against the main North-

CONFIDENTIAL

South street in Rittershoffen, an attack towards the church in the East Central part of Rittershoffen, and an attack to the NE from the SW portion of Rittershoffen. This attack jumped off on time and was closely supported by mortars, artillery, and flame throwers. Intense enemy artillery fire and S/A fire broke up this attack with no appreciable gain for our troops.

Throughout the remainder of the day, the situation remained tense. The slightest movement on either side calling for heavy artillery concentrations. Tank action throughout the day resulted in heavy casualties on both sides. Nearly all the action on this date took place at very short range under most difficult conditions of observation. The weather was such that Liaison Planes could not fly. Ground observers could see only short distances, and due to the movement of the troops on each side, it was frequently very difficult to distinguish friend and foe. Darkness on the 17th found the troops in Hatten in approximately the same position that they had been in the early morning. Ground lost in the morning C/A's was regained at the cost of numerous casualties. These troops were tired and considerably shaken by the tremendous volume of artillery fire that had been placed in the town by our own as well as the enemy's artillery. No material change had been made in the situation nor dispositions of the troops in Rittershoffen. The troops on both sides welcomed a rest and the night was marked by almost a complete lack of any activity other than harrassing

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artillery fires.

Enerything remaining quiet until about 0835 in the morning when a group of enemy tanks were located at R167346. These tanks were fired upon by med artillery and several hits were obtained. During the morning, visibility improved considerably, and ground observers were able to adjust heavy artillery on enemy occupied pillboxes at R174347 and R186347. Three direct hits with 240mm how on the latter pillbox caused smoke to come from the pillbox, but the fog closed in before the extent of the damage could be finally ascertained. In the middle of the afternoon, numberous small but profitable targets were picked up by ground observers and were fired upon with profit and good effect. About 1550, about 12 tanks were found at R15953406 in the northern part of Rittershoffen. Fire of the 6th FA Group was adjusted on them using an AOP. It was believed that 6 of these tanks were destroyed or heavily damaged. The remainder took cover in nearby buildings and woods, and were lost to view.

appeared to be flashes from rocket guns coming from vicinity
R2183/S and requested artillery fire. As the first volley
was fired on this mission, 6 rockets landed immediately in
rear of ABtry position of the 499th AFA Bn. Other reports
of rockets falling in the area confirmed the fact there was
apparently a Btry of Nebelweffers in action. Six Btry
volleys were fired at the location where the flashes were meen,
and no more rocket fire was received for two days. The

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artillery fire apparently hit an ammunition dump in the rocket position area as a very large, brilliant fire was started which burned for approximately 5 minutes.

At about 1915, hostile tanks were heard moving in the northern portion of Hatten. These tunks were apparently moving into positions in the open from which buildings in the S part of Hatten could be engaged by direct fire, as they commenced firing into the buildings occupied by our troops at about 2000 and in spite of artillery fire delivered at suspected locations, these tanks continued to harrass and annoy our troops throughout the night. At 2035, the Gofmans pushed in an attack supported by Infantry and tanks from the E and NE against our position in Hatten. This attack was promptly smotthered by artillery fire and by 2045, the situation was reported as quiet. At 2120, a message was received from the CO, CCR, Col. Huddelson, which was essentially as follows: "Request you inform all artillery participating that your fire on the last C/A in Hatten was the best demonstration of concentrated fire power that our troops have seen to date. Believe it saved the day."

The defensive fires mentioned were asked for and fell within 50 yds of friendly troops and are known to have inflicted very heavy enemy casualties. At the time this fire was delivered, practically all of the friendly troops had been driven to cover in basements as results of the direct fire coming from the tanks mentioned above. The remainder of the night remained quiet except for the usual harrassing missions.

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At 0020, observers from CCB, 14th Armored Division, reported increased activity in the NW portion of Rittershoffen and reported hearing the movement of heavy equipment. They also reported that since the med artillery fire against the tanks in the northern part of town the afternoon before, "popping noises" had been heard almost continuously, and they believed an ammunition dump had been hit. It is possible that the sound of movement of heavy equipment noted at this time was an attempt to evacuate tanks disabled (confirmed later artic true acts). the afternoon before. The night remained generally quiet, and little activity was noted until 0755 when the enemy laid down a heavy barrage on the SW portion of Hatten and delivered a heavy attack from the N, NE, and E. All available artillery was brought into action on the N and E portions of Hatten. At 0922, CCR reported hostile fire had slackened materially, but that the situation was still tense, the enemy having gained some ground on the E. Bulk of fire was then shifted on the S and E portion of the town. At 0931, observers with CCR in Hatten requested that the fire be moved in closer to our troops on the E and reported that 3 enemy tanks on the ridge at approximately R175342 were firing by direct laying into Hatten. By 0940, the hostile attack was definitely broken. At 1227, an artillery FO with troops in Hatten sent the following message: "Need fire badly at R176337, tanks and Infantry. Our troops burning S.O.I.'s". A new attack from the E had pushed our troops out of 5 or 6 houses in Hatten. At 1308, another call was received for

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additional fire in the clearing between the two streets in the W part of Hatten. Prompt delivery of this fire caught enemy troops in the open and caused heavy casualties.

Enemy pressure continued heavy until about 1400 when the attacks appeared to be completely broken. Clearing weather in the afternoon permitted several profitable observed missions on hostile infantry, but air observers were not able to operate due to high winds.

At 1610, an air support mission was fired thru one of the med artillery Bn which marked Miederroedern with smoke and the town was successfully dive-bombed by our Air Force, the mission being completed at 1620. The surprise nature of the request for this fire mission prevented the laying down of AA artillery neutralization fires. The bombers and country belta, received such heavy AA fire that they were unable to strafe the town after bombing it.

firing 30 rds of 8" how shells on the Hatten-Buhl bridge,
and believed that they had so damaged the approaches that

| Later front merrel close into inefficient
the bridge was unuseable. Around 2000, an unusual amount
of traffic was heard moving on the Buhl-Hatten Rd. Some
of this traffic appeared to be stopping in the vicinity of
Maginot Line pillboxes near this Rd, and some appeared to
be going into Hatten. This traffic continued until
approximately 2400 in spite of numerous TOT's which were
fired at critical points along this road.

20 January 1945:

The early morning hours of the 20th were marked by

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extremely active and hold enemy patrolling throughout the H atten area. At 0235 in the morning, "B" Btry of the 977th FA was ordered to move to locations in another area. At 0730, 1t began to snow and visibility was reduced nearly to 100 yds. At 1030, the snow had stopped and visibility had improved and the remainder of the morning was consummed in firing observed missions on known enemy strongpoints, pillboxes, and small groups of enemy observed moving on foot on the Buhl-Hatten Rd. At 1400, a heavy smoke screen was built up about 200 yas E of Hatten apparently to cover some movement being made by hostile troops. Artillery fire was placed on and behind this screen and heavy retaliatory fires were received from the Germans. Snow started again in the aftermoon and prevented any effective observation of artillery fire and the activity decreased rapidly during the afternoon. The day was marked as the first one in 12 days where the Germans failed to put on a sizeable attack. Our troops welcomed the opportunity to rest and improve their positions. The 20th of January will be remembered by all troops engaged in the Rittershoffen Hatten Battle, not only because the enemy failed to attack and they were allowed to rest, but by the rapidity with which they executed a withdrawal from very close contact with the enemy without his apparently discovering their departure.

The Division Artillery Commander, 14th Armored Division, at 1300, was advised that the VI Corps was moving at once to a new defensive line S of the Haguenau Forest and generally

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along the Moder River, that the 14th Armored Division, less the artillery, would assemble in the vicinity of Dettwiller, Q8017, that he would report at once to Corps Artillery Headquarters for orders concerning movement and new positions for the artillery, and that the mission of the 14th Armored Division Artillery would be that of general support of the 79th and 103rd Infantry Divisions. CCA of the 14th Armored Division was to remain in position and cover the withdrawal of the 79th Division.

the 21st of January, the Division Artillery Commander returned to his GP and directed that the various Bn Commanders with the necessary parties meet him at Corps Artillery Headquarters for orders at once. At about 1530, instructions were given to Division Artillery Executive to start infiltrating his Headquarters to Minversheim, Q916206, immediately and to move the AOP landing field to its fomer position near Hattmatt, Q770215. A noteworthy event which occurred on the afternaon of the 20th was the movement of the AOP's planes from their landing field in the vicinity of Hegeney, (R0032) to Hattmatt (Q770215) in a very heavy snow storm, with visibility at times less than 100 yds.

The 500th AFA was attached to GCA for use in covering the movement, and permission was obtained to move the 499th AFA Bn to the vicinity of Ohlungen (Q9728) without delay. The necessary route clearances having been obtained through the Haguenau Forest, this Bn initiated its movement at 1725 and closed in its new position at 0245 on the 21st. The 500th AFA, after supporting the withdrawal of GCA, closed in its

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new position area in the vicinity of Uhrwiller, (99529) at 1315 on the 21st. These movements were made on roads cluttered with traffic, covered with ice, and heavy snow. No equipment or ammunition was abandoned or lost during this displacement.

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In an effort to help restore the VI Corps' maik line of resistance, the 11th Armored Division commanded by Brigadier General A. C. Smith, made plans to seize Hatten and Rittershoffen.\*

The quality of the German troops encountered in Hatten and Rittershoffen revealed that the enemy was throwing the best it had into those two villages in a determined effort to make its campaign a success.

The enemy had a great deal to gain if it could relieve American pressure from the Colmar Pocket and also join up with the bridgehead established across the Rhine River in the vicinity of Drusenheim.

The apparent plan of the German High Command was to quickly join forces with the Drusenheim thrust before the Americans could regroup their forces. If rapidly fuzed, this joint force would be in a position to smash through to Strassbourg. This accomplishment would have made good Heinrich Himmler's boast that German troops would be back in Strassbourg by 30 January 1945.\*\* With the large Alsatian city in their hands, the enemy would be in a strategic position to add support to the Germans contained in the vicinity of Colmar by American and French forces.\*\*\*

Enemy infantry type units identified in the battle of Hatten and Rittershoffen were (at Hatten) 1st Battalion, 35th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 1st Battalion, 119th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (later shifted to Rittershoffen) and the 2d Battalion 119th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, all of the 26th Panzer Grenadier Division. These units participated in

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<sup>\* -</sup> Operations Instructions #9, Hq, lith Armd Div., 120030 Jan 1945

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the first attack against Hatten on 9 January 1945. On 11 January the 220th Panzer Engineer Battalion of the 21st Panzer Division showed up. on 14 January the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 20th Parachute Rogiment made their appearance and were followed the next day by the 2nd Battalion, 20th Parachute Regiment, all of the 7th Parachute Division. January 16th saw the 104th Volks Grenadier Regiment of the 47th Volks Grenadier Division added to the force in Hatten. (At Rittershoffen) the 2d Battalion, 125th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and the 1st Battalion 192d Panzer Grenadier of the 21st Panzer Division engaged American forces on 10 January 1945. In the ensuing days the 1st Battalion, 119th Panser Grenadier Regiment left Hatten to join the forces in Rittershoffen. On 13 January the 2d Battalion, 192d Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 21st Panzer Division appeared in Rittershoffen. Elements of the 104th Volks Grenadier Regiment arrived in Rittershoffen on 16 January. The following day the 103d Volks Grenadier Regiment were identified in Rittershoffen. These two latter regiments are of the 47th Wolks Grenadier Division. Thesa units were supported throughout by organizations identified as the 5th Tank Battalion, 22d Tank Regiment, 21st Panzer Recommaissance Battalion, 125th Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion, 25th Anti-tank Battalion, 155th Panzer Artillery Regiment, 1151st General Artillery Battalion and 1152d General Headquarters Artillery Battalion.\*

Earlier attempts had been made to restore the maik line of resistance when at 1300 on 9 January, Company "A", hath Tank Rattalion (Combat Command "A") was sent from Kuhlendorf to Rittershoffen with the

\* - 0-2 Report, lith Armored Division

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mission of assisting the 242d Infantry in straightening the line. An unknown number of enemy tanks were reported at that time to be flanking Rittershoffen from the south, while to the north German personnel carriers and tanks were maneuvering into position. At approximately 1420 one platoon ("A" - 48th Tank Battalion) went into position on the south flank east of Rittershoffen to meet the threat of the Nazi southern envelopment. The platoon consisting of four medium tanks engaged sixteen German tanks and took the enemy under fire. Six medium sized enemy tanks were knocked out without the loss of either American men or equipment.\* The remainder of all the German armor fled eastward. With its position stable in Rittershoffen, elements of the 2h2d Infantry and 18th Tark Battalion planned a coordinated attack on Hatten. The attack jumped off at 1710, January 9, with one platoon of tanks and one platoon of infantry advancing to the east of either side of Hatten. The assault on the northern flank of Hatten met little opposition and established itself on the north edge of town. The attack on the south side encountered some resistance, knocked out one tank, one personnel carrier and a staff care. The westerly most portion of Hatten was then secured. \*\* Relief of Company "A", both Tank Battalion was made at 2230, 9 January with a tank destroyer platoon of the 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion and "F" and "G" Companies of the 315th Infantry in town. \*\*\* The enemy was still strongly positioned in the west of Hatten after previously driving the 242d into the western part of Hatten, where which is a story within itself.

<sup># -</sup> Hq, 48th Tank Bn, 9 Jan 45. /s/ Major James N. Studer, S-3

<sup>\*\*\* -</sup> Ibid \*\*\* - Hq, Lath Tank Bn, "Activities - 9 Jan 1915" /s/ James N. Studer, S-3 \*\*\*\* - S-2 Report, 79th Infantry Division

the mission of capturing the terrain on either side of the road running southeast out of Hatten. This section would have cut one of the enemy's main arties of supply into Hatten.\* Shortly after the attack jumped off, "A" Company's (h8th Tank Battalion) mission was changed in order to counteract the threat of an impending enemy attack to the northwest of Hatten.\*\* The bulk of "A" Company moved to stop the attack to the northwest, leaving a covering force to contain the enemy on the south side of Hatten.

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in repelling an attack of approximately two hundred infantry and six tanks.\*\*\* One German tank was knocked out with one probable and the enemy attack was successfully repulsed. At noon the remainder of the light Tank Battalion closed in the Niederbetschdorf area. At approximately 1530, "B" Company, hath Tank Battalion was in battle postion directly south of Rittershoffem and "C" Company, hath Tank Battalion, moved into battle position north and east of Rittershoffen.

Probing infantry patrols were sent to the railroad station (17.8 - 33.2) and found the place strongly defended. Other patrols found that the major portion of Hatten was occupied except for the southwestern part.\*\*\*

At approximately 1600 the 2d Battalion, 315th Infantry and tanks from "Be Company, 48th Tank Battalion attacked through the gap between Hatten and the woods to the South. The assault progressed in spite of intense small arms, machine gun and cannon fire from the enemy. This

<sup># -</sup> See Map ## - Operations Report, 48th Tank Bn, 10 Jan 45

<sup>\*\*\* -</sup> Ibid \*\*\* - Operations Report - 48th Tank Bn, 10 Jan 45

German riflemen and machine gun fire was destroyed by a bazooka team
from Company "F", 315th Infantry and another by tanks of "B" Company,
hath Tank Battalion.\* The enemy quickly replaced their losses and hostile
fire from the southeast of Hatten knocked out the leading American tank.
Communications on two platoon leaders tanks failed. Four American tanks
were hit by fire from the vicinity of Hatten. At 1735 the units were
ordered to withdraw from the attack.\*\*

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Meanwhile, "C" Company, h8th Tank Battalion and Infantrymen of the 315th Infantry Regiment attacked to the northeast of Hatten with the objective of seizing the high ground on either side of the road to the northeast of Hatten, thereby cutting the German's connecting link with Stundwiller.\*\*\* The enemy was well entrenched in this sector with tanks and AT gums. Six enemy tanks were hit with AP (75mm) arms which did not ricochet but the extent of their damage is unknown. Three American tanks were disabled by the enemy's AT and tank fire. This attack was called off at the same time as the one to the south of Hatten. After withdrawing, the tanks outposted positions on the eastern edge of Rittershoffen beginning at 1730, 10 January.\*\*\*\*

Enemy reinforcements were brought into Hatten during the early hours of 11 January.\*\*\*\* An intense artillery concentration preceded an attack on Rittershoffen. The enemy assault was launched with infantry using draws to the northeast of Rittershoffen as avenues of

<sup># -</sup> S-2 Report, 135th Infantry Regiment. - Operations Report - 48th Tank Bn, 10 Jan 45.

<sup>### -</sup> See Map. #### - Operations Report - 48th Tank Bn, 10 Jan 45.

<sup>\*\*\*\* -</sup> Operations Report - 40th Tank bin, 10 -

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approach. Kraut infantrymen managed to infiltrate into Rittershoffen on the north and east sides where they were reinforced by tanks.\*

Using tanks and half tracks for local security the enemy infantry gained control of the northern and eastern portion of Rittershoffen. Small but bitter engagements of CCA and the 3d Battalion, 315th Infantry were fought with the enemy who held on tenaciously.\*\*

At daylight 12 January, GCA and the 315th Infantry Regiment were to exert heavy pressure on Rittershoffen and screen the passage of GCB whose mission was to seize Hatten from the north with one battalion allowing the passage of a following battalion to cut roads east of Hatten.\*\*\* The attack was intended to restore the VI Corps: MLR and thus relieve elements of the 2d Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment and remnants of the 2d Battalion, 2h2d Infantry which were isolated in the westerly most buildings of Hatten. These troops had suffered heavily from enemy attacks since 9 January 1945.\*\*\*\*

A fifteen-minute American artillery concentration fell on the southeast edge of Rittershoffen while CCA poised for the attack at 0750, 12 January. After the artillery barrage, tanks from the 48th Tank Battalion brought fire on the southeast edge of Rittershoffen to support foot soldiers who attacked at 0840 and were repulsed by small arms fire from the enemy.\*\*\*\*\* 48th Tank Battalion armor brought more fire into the area southeast of Rittershoffen and lost two medium tanks by AT guns in the procedure.\*\*\*\*\*\*\* Neither tanks nor infantry succeeded

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<sup>\*\* -</sup> S-2 Journal, 315th Infantry Regiment

<sup>\*\*\* - 0-3, 14</sup>th Armd Div, Lt. Col. Joo C. Lambert

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<sup>\*\*\*\*\* -</sup> Operations Report - 48th Tank Bn, 10 Jan 1945
\*\*\*\*\* - Operations of 48th Tk Bn, Hq, 12 Jan 45, /s/ James N. Studer

in driving the Germans from their strongly held positions on the southeastern side of Rittershoffen.\* Tanks and infantrymen of CCA joined the 3d Battalian, 315th Infantry in consolidating positions on the western and southwestern side of Rittershoffen. Two companies of the 18th Tank Battalion (CCA) withdrew to Niederbetschdorf during the evening. \*\* CCB was unsuccessful in its attempt to flank Hatten from the north. A large dug-in force of enemy infantry supported by tanks and heavy artillery fire broke up the advance to the north of Rittershoffen. CCB established a defensive position north of Rittershoffen along the road leading to Leiterswiller. CCB did not advance beyond this position during the ensuing days. \*\*\* The 2d Battalion of the 315th Infantry (79th Div) and remnants of the 242d Infantry (42d Div) were still cut off in west Hatten. The 213th Field Artillery Battalion fired medical supplies into these units, \*\*\*\*

During the darkness of 12-13 January, Combat Command Reserve, commanded by Colonel D. H. Hudelson, was moved into Niederbetschdorf and prepared to attack Hatten from the south on the morning of 13 January 1945. This effort, if successfully completed, would cut off the German troops in Rittershoffen and restore the main line of resistance. \*\*\*\*\*

Preparatory to crossing the line of departure, which was the road running south from Rittershoffen (Vic 16-33) the 19th AIB (CCR) deployed with "A" Company on the left, "B" Company on the right and "C" Company

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<sup>-</sup> Ibid

<sup>-</sup> S-3 Journal, CCA, lith Armd Div \*\*\*\* - History of Hq, 79th Div Arty, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1915

<sup>\*\*\*\* - 19</sup>th AIB Journal, lith Armd Div

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in reserve. Upon reaching the open field enemy fire was directed at the Americans from southeast Rittershoffen. To avoid this fire, the ascault Battalion was moved hurriedly to defilade on the southern side of the railroad tracks. "A" Company retained their position in the field, some men using ditches along the line of departure for protection. "B" company, to the right rear of "A" Company, pulled into the woods south of the railroad tracks to avoid a concentration of tracer and ball ammo fire from enemy automatic weapons, which was also coming from the southern portion of Rittershoffen. The woods, although sparsely covered with large trees, afforded adequate protection for "B" Company. These same woods were being screened by the 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron.

As a result of this harassing fire the jump off was detained approximately ten minutes. However, the companies soon reorganized, directed small arms against Rittershoffen and pressed eastward. Friendly artillery laid smoke to cover the advance of the attack.

The field stretched before the attacking companies offered little in the way ofprotection. The flat open terrain was only broken by furrows lightly covered with snow. The plowed field stretched east toward Hatten rising in a gradual slope to the north of Hatten where the enemy was well entrenched. The Germans were using "Maginot Line" pillboxes, for the protection of anti-tank guns. These pill boxes were strategically located and protected any attempt at the high ground to the north of Hatten and the flat area to the east of Hatten. These formidable defenses were well used to hold what the enemy had gained and to keep the Americans from interrupting the flow of supplies and reinforcements which came in via the roads south, east and north of Hatten.

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massault and reached a line approximately 300 yards west of the railroad station (17.6-33.3) where heavy mortar, artillery, small arms and automatic weapon fire halted their advance. This fire was coming from the buildings on the southeastern side of Hatten as well as from dug in enemy positions in the same area.

Meanwhile, "B" Co had pulled back slightly at the jump-off to relieve the bunched up situation, when then existed. "B" Company worked forward, drawing small arms fire from the cemetery (18-33) to its front. At the same time enemy 88mm and AT fire began falling on the men in the field.\* The infantrymen called for tank support and 2d Lt. Oray Thoron radioed via SCR 300 for the vital armor to come forward.

Five medium tanks, "C" Company, 17th Tank Battalion moved across the field supported by direct tank fire from the remaining two platoons of "C" Company, which were firing their 75mm and 76mm cannons into the southern edge of Hatten. Other tanks from the 17th Tank Battalion were also firing at Hatten and Rittershoffen from the same position.

The five tanks commanded by 2d Lt. Seth Sprague proceeded boldly across the open field in line formation to give closer support to "A" and "B" Companies of the 19th AIB. The assault armor drew heavy fire as it sped eastward. The tanks followed a route approximately 200 yards south of the railroad tracks. Germans pumped AT and artillery fire from the direction of Hatten. All the infantrymen hugged the earth in the face of this fire directed at the tanks. Pfc James R. Benzinger,

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<sup># - 19</sup>th AIB Journal.

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end some forth feet in the air". The helmet belonged to Pfe Zolen Nowman, victim of a direct hit by an 88mm AP shell. Fire from the same type weapon knocked out three of five tanks before the other two were forced to withdraw. No one was seen leaving the stricken tanks, two of which burned immediately.\* The withdrawing tanks took up another firing position. After traveling westward approximately two hundred hards, the remaining two tanks of Sprague's platoen opened fire with cannon (75mm) and machine gun into the Hatten railroad station. The American tanks fired approximately ten minutes and then withdraw.\*\* While the infantrymen were deliberating what course of action to take, the enemy opened up with mortars and machine gun fire, inflicting casualties on the foot troops spread out across the field and sheltered in vacated enemy slit trenches and fox-holes. Radio contact was attempted by both "A" and "B" Companies but these devices failed to function properly.

Several tries were made to press the advance but extremely heavy enemy artillery, mortar, machine gun and small arms fire broke up the enfantry endeavors. Tanks from another platoon of "A" Company, 47th Tank Battalion attempted to take the same route that Lt. Sprague's tanks had used in an effort to aid the infantrymen. Of the five tanks sent forward, two were knocked out and the other three tanks continued to fire on Hatten until, out of ammunition, they were forced to withdraw, under heavy fire.

Aid men administered first-aid to the wounded and were not deliberately fired upon by the enemy.\*\*\* Any other movement of the troops

<sup># - 1</sup>st Lt. Russel T. Blair, "B" Co, 19th AIB

<sup>\*\*\* -</sup> Ibid \*\*\* - 2d Lt. Gray Thoran, "B" Co, 19th AIB

however, brought down small arms and machine gun fire from Hatten.

The 2d and 3d Platoons of "A" Company receiving the brunt of
the enemy fire began to withdraw. This action was unknown to Capt.

Ernest M. Spokes, Commanding Officer, "A" Company, who, with other men,
had sought refuge in a vacated enemy bunker on the open field. In the
bunker with Spokes was 2d Lt. Robert L. Palecek, FO, of the 499th Armd
Pield Artillery Battalion, who was attempting to adjust smoke and fire
on the southern edge of Hatten to shield the troops. Palecek was using
an SCR 300, and because of communication difficulty was only partially
successful in his attempt.

When the platoons of "A" Company withdrew, the north flank of "B" Company was left exposed. Realizing this, and having no radio contact, It. Thoron ordered T/Sgt. J. Conroy to contact Captain Thomas E. Conboy, Commanding Officer, Company "B" who was positioned at the edge of the woods, (16.9-32.6). In order to make himself as light as possible, Sgt. Conroy doffed his gas mask, rifle and all other heavy equipment. The Sgt. ran under fire until exhausted then rested. After racing approximately 250 yards the Sgt. reached Capt. Conboy. When he had regained his breath, Conroy gave the company's situation in five words, "Piss poor, gotta' get out". Capt Conboy tried to contact battalion for permission to withdraw his company.

Meanwhile, 1st Lt. Russel T. Blair (Merkel, Texas) commanding "B"

Company men in the field, gave the order for withdrawal to his men.

Flair assumed that "A" Company had received a withdrawal notice and because he had no communication did not know otherwise. Realizing "B"

Company's left flank was exposed by "A" Company's departure, Blair established machine gun and small arms as a base of fire and sent the

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<sup># - 19</sup>th AIB Journal.

wounded men back first. Light machine gunners Pfc Roy Thompson and Pfc Andrew Fetcbeck, both laid down an able protecting cover with .30 Caliber while all of "B" Company infiltrated back. Thompson had no tripod for his weapon so he laid it on the edge of a vacated Jerry for-hole to steady it. Thompson kept up this fire even after being injured.

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helping wounded men get started to the rem. With the exception of Capt.

Spokes and his men in the bunker, "A" and "B" Companies reached the edge of
the woods where the difficult task of reorganizing the men began. A

defensive line was set up, approximately 1000 yards southeast of the
line of defense in Foret D'Aschbruck where the troops began to dig in.

Rations, anmo, radios and other equipment lost or destroyed in the fight
on the field were brought up to the men.

Captain Spokes and his men remained in the dugout. There were thirteen soldiers in all with the "A" Company Commander, including six casualties, three of whom were litter cases. The injured men had crawled into the bunker in a state of shock and were then treated for injury. To relieve their nervous tension, Capt. Spokes assured the men that the situation was well in hand, knowing full well that their position was desperate. Several more men squirmed into one shelter of the bunker to boost the total to seventeen men.

One of these men, Pfc Marlowe D. Gebhart said, "Captain Spokes, I'll have to sign a statement of charges for the carbine I lost" and then held up the stump of a hand that had been holding the lost carbine. After receiving first aid, Gebhart kidded with the rest of the men and helped to

- 12 --

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<sup># -</sup> Capt. Ernest M. Spokes, CO, Co "A", 19th AlB

keep up their spirits.

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The additional men did not help the already crowded situation in the bunker which was approximately ten feet long, five feet did and three feet deep. "But it sure felt good to get off that field and into the ground." Radio contact was unsuccessfully attempted with the 19th AIB by Lt. Palecek, the artillary forward observer, to get make placed on the southern edge of Hatten so the remaining men in the field could withdraw. Getting nowhere with the radio, Lt. Palecek asked Capt. Spokes if he could try to make it back across the field to get the badly needed smoke. Spokes agreed and Palecek took off under fire. He finally made it back.

Captain Spokes attempted to get the SCR 300 in working order. Contact was finally established and at approximately 1500, smoke began to fall. Palecak's voice was heard over the radio saying, "Get ready to make a break for it, as the tanks come up.". At the same time a platoon of tanks from "A" Company, h7th Tank Battalion passed Spokes' position, laying 75mm and 76mm cannon and machine gum fire on the enemy. Spokes withdrew his group in spite of enemy small arms and morter fire.

Shrapnel-marked jeep ambulances evacuated the wounded from the open field smidst spasmodic enemy fire. An advance aid station was established at the railroad station, (16.0-32.9). Initial treatment and plasma was administered to the patients. Sixty-two casualties were carried into this advance aid station by vehicles and litter teams from the field.

Wounded were questioned as to location of other men whom they had seen hit. Some of the men exaggerated the number but every clue was traced until all wounded were cared for.

<sup>\* -</sup> Sgt. Jack B. Mooney, Yonkers, N.Y.

About 1530 hours American tanks and 10h American soldiers proceeded from the western end of Hatten south to the railroad tracks and then west to the line of departure. These men were remnants of the 2h2d Infantry who had been badly battered in Hatten. The men of the 2h2d Infantry took up positions in the Foret D'Aschbruck.\*

At 1600 troops of "A" and "B" and "C" Companies loaded 15 o 20 men on each of the light and medium tanks of the 17th Tank Battalion and started toward Hatten. Small arms and machine gun fire opened on the column from the southeastern edge of Hatten, but caused no known casualties. The mounted infantrymen could see burned—out American and German tanks littering their entire route across the open field.\*\* These k.o.'d tanks were a result of previous engagements and the present one being waged for the towns of Hatten and Rittershoffen.\*\*\*

Light enemy artillery and mortar fire followed the tanks across the field. As the armor got closer to town enemy mortar fire increased in volume and accuracy, forcing the infantry to dismount approximately 300 yards from the town. The medium tanks went into Hatten via "Y" street which was later used as a supply route, and the rest withdrew to the vicinity of the MLR. The dismounted infantry made their way to the southwestern side of town where contact was established with the 315th Infantry Battalion. Men of both Battalions took up defensive positions within the badly battered houses on both sides of Main Street and "Y" Street to a point approximately (17.4-33.7).\*\*\*\* The 19th AIB troops were split up among the 315th Infantrymen so the newcomers would benefit by the exper-

A PANCOCKAS WILLIAM

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<sup># -</sup> See Map

<sup>\*\* -</sup> See Map

<sup>\*\*\* - 19</sup>th AIB Journal

<sup>#### -</sup> See Map

ience of the soldiers already in Hatten.

A platoen of "G" Company, 19th AIB, situated on the north side of Main Street received a local enemy attack during the night. The enemy came in from the north and with tanks and bazocka fire blasted the platoon out of the houses they were occupying. The "G" Company Platoon took up a defensive position in a house on the south side of main street. Amidst the blaze and confusion, three Germans followed the platoon into the house. The Krauts threw hand grenades and blasted away with "burp" guns. Sgt. Durwood Mefford heard one of the Krauts holler in clear English, "Why don't you Yankee bastards give up?". In reply to this question, the Americans opened up with small arms and BAR fire from within the darkened hallway. The boisterous German fell dead still clutching an American M-1 rifle.\* The other two fled and the local enemy attack subsided.

At approximately 2300, 2d Lt. Walter Dickson, communications officer, contacted Lt. Blair in order to get four men to help carry wire
from two light tanks which had pulled into the southern edge of "Y"
street, now serving as the main supply and evacuation route for Hatten.
Dickson got the four men and started down "Y" street. The group of
Americans were surprised by five Germans who stepped from behind a building with hands raised and said, "Kamerad". Dickson called Blair to take
the PW's off his hands so they could continue after the wire. Blair's
men searched the Krauts and questioned them. One of the PW's said they
were five of a nine man patrol. The remaining Boche showed up in a
house occupied by "G" Company. One of the Germans stepped out of the
kitchen into the dining room occupied by the Americans. This German
said, "Kamerad". The Kraut was told to step into the room. When he did

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<sup>-</sup> Many Germans were using equipment captured from the 2h2d Regiment when they were forced to withdraw hurriedly.

Americans. The German missed his mark and he and the others fled. Pvt. Choddick shot the German who had said "Kamerad" and then fired at the fleeing group, accounting for one more. Other incidents of the same nature were prevalent throughout the compaign.

Dead Germans were strewn all over the area and were used as decoys by enemy patrols who attempted to infiltrate into American positions. GI's were very conscious of the closeness of the enemy during the night.

The dark hours seemed to be ten times as long as the daylight hours.

A constant vigil was maintained in a perimeter defense. Fox-holes were dug on all sides of house foundations. These holes were used to prevent the enemy from getting into the protective rubble of the buildings. The men in the extreme western part of Hatten feld uneasy about the enemy troops in Rittershoffen.\* The Germans held the eastern part of Rittershoffen which was approximately one-half mile away connected with Hatten by means of a first class road on a slight gradient.

Plans were made for a coordinated attack on the northern road running east and west in Hatten.\*\* With this section of Hatten in American hands, the protected enemy route north of Hatten to Rittershoffem would be under control. Both tanks and infantry were to combine their efforts in an attempt to drive the enemy from this sector of Hatten on the morning of 14 January. After medium tanks of the 17th Tank Hattalion had moved into position to support the attack, "A" Company of the 19th AIB and "E" Company of the 315th Infantry Regiment jumped-off. "A" Company

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- 16 -CONFIDENTIAL

<sup># -</sup> lst Lt. Russel T. Blair, "B" Co, 19th AIB

flanked the northern street from the west while "E" Company came up from the southeast. The plan was to join in a pincer movement enveloping the street from both ends while the tanks drove up the middle.\*

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Bazooka, machine gun and small arms fire met the American attack.

One of the tanks was hit but continued forward until surrounded by the enemy. The armored crew were taken prisoner. Wounded men of the tank were treated by the Germans as the infantry pressed the attack and finally drove the enemy back. A defense was set up occupying a clump of houses on the northwestern end of Hatten on the northern street running east and west.

At approximately 2100, "A" and "E" Companies received a severe attak from German Infantry who swarmed down from the slope to the north of their positions. This enemy assault was supported by tank fire from the north and east as well as mortar fire from the same directions. "One enemy tank worked its way west on the northern east-west street. Another eased down from the high ground to the north. The result was a terrific cross-fire of 80mm and machine gun bullets. Jerry pressed, his advance as the Americans were forced to withdraw from the houses which the enemy set after using incendiary bullets and flame throwers. After the buildings caught fire, civilians tried to leave their hiding places in the cellars. The civilians made the mistake of exposing themselves in the street. Then they did, German fire cut them down. A group of Alsatian men, we men and children became entrapped in the basement of a smashed building. The Krauts turned the noszle of a flame-thrower into the building on the imprisoned civilains. The resulting screams of horror and pain could be

<sup>\* -</sup> Capt. Ernest M. Spokes, CO, Co "A", 19th AlB

heard over the noisy tanks, cannon and machine gun fire.

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not companies made their way westward, "mouseholing". This term is used to denote crawling through the blown-out sides and windows of buildings rather than running from one building to another. This method was a safer means of moving up and down the streets. The units worked their way south to the main street joining up with the other companies occupying the houses there. Heavy American artillary fire broke up Jerry's attack. The units consolidated their positions.

and drove "F" Company out of three houses they were holding east of "I" intersection. "B" Company was sent forward and successfully contained the enemy.\*\*

In order to regain the three houses that "F" Company had lost, 2d

Lt. Richard M. Young, Jr., Commanding "C" Company was ordered to counterattack as soon as he could get his forces together. Due to an intense

artillary and mortar barrage laid down by the enemy, it was some time

before the men were coordinated. By the time "C" Company was ready to

jump off, two medium tanks of "A" Company, h7th Tank Battalion were positioned on Main Street to support the attack. Four more tanks stayed in the

rear as covering fire. At 1915 all units began their advance through the

rubble of houses lining bothsides of the main street. Close contact was

necessary due to the poor visibility in the darkness which was not helped

any by the smoke and dust which enemy HE shells were kicking up. Demolished

buildings blocked the path of the Americans. Smoldering ashes blinded

and choked the men as they inched forward. A medium tank kept pace with

- 18 -

<sup>\* -</sup> Men of "A" and "B" Companies, 19th AIB.

the men of "C" Company and slowly clanked up the rubble-littered main street.

At "Y" intersection, the advancing units were halted in anticipation of making close contact with the enemy in the next few moments. The tank sought the cover of "Y " street running south off main street. As the group moved forward once more the tank jockeyed into a position which found it silhouetted against a burning building. From the west end of main street, two 75mm rounds from an American tank found their marks in the turret and engine compartment of the tank at "Y" intersection, barely distinguishable in the smoky haze. These 75mm rounds came from an American tank parked on the western outskirts of Hatten who thought the silhouetted tank to be enemy.\* The stricken tank caught fire. Small arms and 75mm shells within the vehicle began to explode. "C" Company men on the south side of main street were reluctant to pass the exploding armor. After hesitating momentarily the infantrymen swung south of the buildings on main street and passed the blazing tank. Lt. Young went back to bring up another tank to support his men who continued forward. The relief tanker did not think he could make it past the burning tank which was by this time an inferno. Young convinced the tanker that he could get past by gunning his own tank in a burst of speed. \*\* The tanker said, "O.K., I'll try".

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Meanwhile, "C" Company had "mouseholed" through the devastated buildings until enemy bazooka, intense small arms and machine gun fire halted their forward motion. The supporting tank relieved the situation by speeding past the burning tank and firing into the enemy. "C"

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<sup>\* - 2</sup>d Lt. Richard M. Young, Jr., "C" Co, 19th AIB

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Company again pressed forward. The tank pulled to the south side of main street out of the field of fire from the slight bend in the road ahead. This bend was the crucial point in the entire village. Jerry tanks were around the eastern side of the bend, American armor commanded the western side of the bend. American or German tanks dared not protrude more than the barrel of their cannon around either side of the corner.

After gaining the rubble of two more buildings on both sides of main street the enemy once more held up the advance with basooks, machine gun and small arms fire.

The American medium again came forward and fired its 75mm and machine gun into suspected enemy positions. The Germans quickly retaliated with a barrage of basooka fire which forced the tank to withdraw. In an effort to flank the enemy from the south, Capt. Harold S. Persky led a platoon of tanks (Co "C", 47th Tank Bn) to the south of the main street in Hatten. Three of these tanks were knocked out by German bazooka and artillery fire. The remaining two tanks withdraw to the assembly area at the foot of "Y" Street.\*

The 2d and AT platoons of "C" Company combined into one unit. The total of twenty men were brought up to aid the other platoons of C Company. These support units enabled their parent organization to gain one more building thus securing all that "F" Company had lost.

The operation had taken five hours to accomplish and "C" Company men were weary as they made ready to hold what was left of the ground they had captured.

A Gorman counterattack was not long in coming. One hour later an enemy force infiltrated from the north into the 3d platoon's "C" Co, positions. In the face of bazookaand "burp" gun fire, the platoon

<sup>\* -</sup> Marked "X" on the map - 20 -

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withdrew to the rear. This action left the men of "Q" Company on the southern side of main street, with an exposed left flank. To overcome this situation, the men moved to the rear approximately 75 yards, where they drew abreast of the 3d platoon on the northern side of main street. The units held good fields of fire over the desolated waste of the broken building in this spot and decided to hold. The enemy attempted to advance westward but was quickly dispersed with hand grenades, BAR and small arms fire. "Q" Company spent the remainder of the night munching "K" Rations and good naturedly "bitching" about the battle of Hatten, the army as a whole, and all things in general. This action was typical of the small unit engagements in the ensuing days. Americans would attack and win several shattered buildings. Then the Germans would counterattack. If the enemy infantry could not advance, their tanks and artillery came to support them. This was true of both sides in the see-saw struggle for Hatten\*, as well as Rittershoffen.\*\*

During the dark hours of the morning, elements of "A" Troop of the 9hth Cavalry Recommaissance Squadron reinforced "C" Company in their forward position. The enemy continued to fire intermittent small arms, machine gun, bazooka, mortar and artillery into the western edge of Hatten. One of the artillery rounds accounted for another medium tank of "A" Company parked on the western outskirts of Hatten.

Much of the battle was an artillery duel between the Americans and Germans. All through the period losses were sustained on both sides by the constant pounding of artillery pieces firing HE, W/P, and AP ammunition. As many as fifteen American Field Artillery Battalions fired at one time on Hatten during the ensuing days.\*\*\* Artillery shells with

- 21 -

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<sup>\*-</sup> Pfc James R. Benzinger \*\* - S-2 Report, 315th Infantry Regiment \*\*\* - Major Forest T. Green, CO, 19th AIB

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delayed fuses went clear to the cellars of enemy occupied houses before exploding. White phosphorous was used by both Americans and Germans. The enemy was using white phosphorous apparently captured previously from other units, because they do not have any of their own.

of Hatten and Rittershoffen are the figures taken from the 199th and 507th Armd Field Artillery Battalions.\*\*\* These two field artillery battalions fired approximately 3100 rounds of high explosive and approximately 100 rounds of white phosphorous from light artillery pieces (105mm Bowitzers) on different days during the battle. Everything including 60 and 81mm mortars, 105 S/P guns and howitzers, 155mm guns and howitzers, 210mm howitzers and 8m guns were used by American artillery to harass and repel the Germans. VI Corps artillery, in addition to other supporting units fired on the area - Hatten and Rittershoffen from the period 9 January to 20 January.\*\*\*

At 0600 15 January, Major Forest T. Green, OD of 19th AIB, informed Lt. Young via SCR 300 that "E" Company of the 315th Infantry would attack through "C" Company's positions. At 0815 assault formations of "E" Company came down the main street to "C" Company's positions. It. Young called to the officer in charge and gave him the situation. He added a word of caution about getting the attacking forces into the protection of the rubble. The officer nodded approval but kept his men on the street.\*\*\*\*\*\*E" Company continued down the avenue approximately 50 yards east of "C" Company's position where enemy machine gun, basooka, "burp" guns, small arms fire and flame throwers inflicted extremely heavy

<sup>\* -</sup> Q-2 Report, 79th Div, and lith Armd Div

<sup>\*\*\*\* -</sup> S-3 Report, 14th Armd Div Arty

\*\*\*\* - Colonel Maurice K. Kurtz, 14th Armd D.A.O.

\*\*\*\* - Lt. Richard M. Young, Jr., "C" Co, 19th AIB

casualties on the attacking soldiers.\* The intense fire caused the men of "E" Company to withdraw. They did so under the supporting fire of "C" Company.

While "E" Company was withdrawing Lt. Young was called to Battalion

Headquarters to tell what had happened. The Lieutenant worked his way
back to the GP located in the ruins of a blasted building. Young spoke
above the pathetic whispering of the injured men who lay on the floor.

He told the group of battalion staff officers what he had seen. Major
Green then said, "Young, you'll have to make the attack, since "E"

Company has failed." The Lieutenant replied, "Sir, how do you think my
men will feel after seeing what happened to "Easy" Company?" Major Green
thought a moment, then said, "All right, we'll see Lt. Col. Earl F.

Holton."\*\* The two officers went back to Colonel Holton's GP located
in the cellar of a blown-out building. The men made their way down the rubble laden steirs into a crowded smoky room, miserably lighted by a few
candles. Major Green explained the situation to Colonel Holton. The
colonel listened and very emphatically said, "Charlie Company WILL attack."

Lt. Young informed his platoon leaders of the circumstances. One said, "Are we the only Goddamn company in the Army?", another platoon leader added, "Why those silly bastards". Young cut them short by saying, "Yeah, I know, but we're going anyway.". To support the attack, the AT and 2d platoons formed a heavy base of fire with machine guns, PARs and rifles. The 1st and 3d platoons jumped off. The men were mad as they crouched low and plodded through the rubble of the buildings. Their anger must have helped because the enemy was routed out and "C" Company again reached the ruins they had been forced to evacuate the might before. Not a man in "C" Company was hit during the attack. The men

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<sup># -</sup> History, 79th Div Arty, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1915

\*\* - Commanding Officer of 2d Battalion, 315th Infantry, in charge of all elements in Hatten

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felt better as they again prepared to hold what they had. The soldiers took up positions behind corners of blown-out walls, heavy fallen timber and other debris offering protection in the semblance of the houses and barns they were occupying. The stay was again short-lived when the Germans attacked in force with bazookas, rifle grenades, small arms and machine gun fire. A medium tank attempted to support the Americans and came forward through the rubble. The tank fired two rounds from its 75mm before heavy bazooka fire forced its withdrawal. After the American tank departed "C" Company was also forced to withdraw in the face of heavy enemy fire of all descriptions. The Germans followed "C" Company back until "B" Company was brought up to stop the enemy. Two Tiger tanks made their appearance from the East. American tanks and tank destroyers attempted to get into positions to battle the Tigers, but were prevented by one of the firing Panzer vehicles. The other enemy tank fired into the buildings that American infantrymen were "mouseholing" through. A German light machine gun crew maneuvered down from the north. The Germans were hidden behind a mamure pile and were firing their weapon down an alley between two buildings. This fire prevented the men from "mouseholing" past the alley. Lt. Blair saw one of the Germans' legs protruding from behind the manure pile. Blair carefully estimated the distance from the end of the German's foot to the apparent position of his body. The Lieutenant pumped three rounds from his carbine through the manure pile. He heard the German scream. The other Kraut took off.

Enemy tracer bullets from the east were fired into the combination of houses and barns which are prevalent throughout the Alsatian area. Hay within the barns soon caught fire. The Americans used the smoke to advantage since it covered their withdrawal. At the same time several

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P-h7's strafed and bombed the eastern section of Hatten as well as the high ground to the north of town.\* The combination of planes and artillery took the impetus from the enemy attack. American infantrymen established themselves in the proximity of the first street running north, west of "Y" intersection.

an OP was established in a building called the "Fort". This concrete structure was located on the mouthern side of main street, just east of "Y" intersection.\*\* The "Fort" had been hit by artillery, tank and mortar fire. It looked it. Gaping holes were in the eastern and northern sides of the walls. Snow covered the blasted floors within the edifice. The roof was a thing of the past as were the windows, shutters and black-out blinds. "B" Company and a platoon of "G" Company occupied the "Fort's" three undamaged rooms on the western side of the building. From the shattered upstairs section of the "Fort", a constant vigil was maintained for enemy activity. In the cellar, aid men worked over the many wounded who could not be evacuated. Between the "Fort" and the first street to the east which ran north, outposts of twelve men occupied the heaping ruins of each building.

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The men were a little jittery that night and more than once fired in the direction of noises which later proved to be stray horses and other animals aimlessly wandering about the desolated village.

During the dark hours information was called down from the outpost that an enemy tank was approaching from the east, along main street.

Its approximate location was given. Lt. Young fumbled with his flash-light and artillery concentration map to determine the registeration

<sup>\* -</sup> Lt. Russel T. Blair, Co "B"; S/Sgt, Edw. S. Pidgeon, Sgt. Earle
A. Simpson, 47th Tank Bn

number nearest the oncoming tank. Before he got the number, the tank let fly with its 88mm at the eastern wall of the "Fort". The blast injured several men. When the dust had settled Young discovered himself unburt but minus map and flashlight. The Lieutenant guessed at the concentration number and called the information back via SCR 300. Jerry let go with another round injuring several more men. American artillery, began landing in the vicinity of the enemy tank and chased it back.

Lt. Robert Lingle and Sgt. Williams, both of "C" Company, directed artillery fire all night at different intervals. The men brought the fire in very close attempting to catch an chance of attack on the American positions. When the artillery caught any of them, Germans could be heard screaming for help in agonized voices. As the hours were on, their screams gave way to meaning and heavy sobbing. Jerry used an old trick in an attempt to confuse the Americans. While the American artillery was dropping on his forces, Jerry dumped a few rounds into the American positions to make it seem that our own artillery was falling short. This ruse tended to confuse anyone attempting to direct the artillery concentrations.

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Behind the "Fort" was located a barn with a stone base reaching upward approximately six feet. A guard was maintained within the barn to prevent any infiltration from the south and southeast. Toward dawn on the 16th of January, Pfc Paul "Pop" Biesel (38 years old, Ass't mail clerk) was observing through a shell hole in the wall when two Germans approached from the southeast. "Pop" was scared to death and afraid to fire for fear of missing the targets. He waited until the Krauts were ten yards from the barn before squeezing the trigger. One died instantly. It took three more rounds to finish the other.

## OONFIDBNIIAL

Before dawn on the morning of 16 January, a seventeen man assault platoon from "A" Company went forward to the northwest sector of Hatten to "feel-out" the enemy. The plateon routed two Garmans out of a building and took them prisoners. The Jerries were "pumped". Information was gained that a force of three German companies were preparing to attack from the north and east. S/Sgt Albert Carey was sent back to inform battalion of the situation. Carey started toward the rear. The platoon continued toward the northern "east-west" road running into the attack. 2d Lt. Joseph Osborne, in charge of the American platoon, radioed back to battalion on a static frequency, "We are being attacked by three companies of Jerries". Reception on the battalion SCR 300 was bad. The Commanding Officer, 19th AIB, thinking the message to be, "We are being attacked by THREE Jerries", radioed back, "Continue the assault". The radio went dead and futile attempts were made to contact the platoon once more. The assault platoon engaged in a fire fight with the leading elements of the three company infantry attack.

Meanwhile, Sgt. Carey arrived at battalion headquarters. The Sgt. informed Major Green of the impending enemy drive which was being spear-headed with bazookas, machine guns and "burp" guns.

All companies were warned of the grave situation. Lt. Col. James
Woodie Lann, Commanding Officer of the 47th Tank Battalion was obliged
to dispense with the plans he had made to provide a diversionary attack
on one flank of Rittershoffen, while GCA attacked Rittershoffen from a
different direction.\* Tanks were rushed to Hatten, where six more of
the 47th Tank Battalion's vehicles were lost in the ensuing battle during

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<sup>\* -</sup> S-3 Journal, 47th Tank Battalion

16 January.\*

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Sgt. Carey brought a replenishing stock of ammunition back to his platoon and also carried orders for the assault platoon to withdraw. This action was supported by fire from a second platoon of "A" Company which was sent forward to help in their withdrawal.

Meanwhile, the Germans pulled a Tiger tank to the ground north of .

Hatten, overlooking the town. Another Tiger rolled up the main street.

Both tanks commenced to fire into houses occupied by "B" and "C" Companies. This fire was followed by Jerry infantrymen who advanced across the rubble of the buildings firing everything in the book.

Outposts of "C" Company began to withdraw. Pvt. Howard Wierum materially aided the withdrawal by laying a supporting concentration of machine gun fire. With a belt of ammo over his shoulder, Wierum fired his light 30 Ca. machine gun from the hip, through different windows of the room he was occupying. The Pvt said jokingly, "I'm a commando", as he held the enemy at bay, allowing his comrades to withdraw, "mousehole" style. The Tiger tank singled out this machine gun menace and fired a direct round of 88mm HE at Wierum. The Pvt was seriously wounded. "C" Company men carried Wierum to the rear through the windows and blasted holes in the sides of the buildings. "C" Company finally arrived at positions approximately seventy-five yards down the street where "B" Company engaged the enemy at an approximate distance of fifty yards with bazookas, rocket launchers, machine gun fire, small arms and hand grenadas. This fire contained the enemy until American artillery and tank fire broke up the attack.

<sup>\* -</sup> As the battle for Hatten progressed during the coming days, so many tanks were lost that the 17th Tank Battalion was forced to assume a defensive attitude with supporting artillery and mortar fire - S-3

Journal, 17th Tank Battalion

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down the street. Slmm mortar rounds were registered on the suspected German positions. Several Krauts were routed and more of the battered buildings in Hatten were set afire. Intermittent enemy artillery continued throughout the day. One of the German rounds scored a direct hit on Capt. Thomas E. Conboy, killing the commander of "B" Company. 1st Lt. Russell T. Rlair, took charge of the Company after Capt. Conboy's death.

tempting to steal into American positions. Artillery from both sides found its mark, adding to the many dead who lay where they had fallen. Cold weather kept the bodies from deteriorating, preventing a stench that only decaying dead men can produce. American sentries, maintaining vigil were sometimes obliged to secure positions very close to their dead comrades for dayson end.\*

An aid station was set up in Hatten to supplement the medical supplies previously parachuted to the 315th Infantry aid men. Captain Charles Hawkins, surgeon and medical Tec 3 Robert Munson had been loaded into a tank with medical supplies to set up the aid station in Hatten.

This was Captain Hawkins' first ride in a tank. "All the Captain wanted to know about the tank was the location of the escape hatch."

Sgt. Munson and his men constantly checked for casualties by going through the debris of the houses in Hatten. When locating a casualty, Munson had litter bearers carry the man back. These litter bearers did a Herculean job of carrying wounded through the blasted walls and windows

<sup>\* -</sup> Major Forest T. Green, CO, 19th AIB

of the buildings. After an enemy mortar barrage landed close, an aid man from the 315th Infantry said, "Hold up, I'm going to drop the litter". The other men suggested he use two hands instead of the one he was using to carry the litter. The tired aid man replied, "I can't", and held up the stump of his other arm.\*

Temporary treatment was given at the aid station in Hatten. To evacuate the casualties out of the town, half tracks and light tanks were loaded with American wounded. Litter cases were stretched across the backs of the tanks and the half tracks. The vehicles took the wounded men back to Niederbetschdorf via the exit leading from "Y" Street to the southwest.

The 19th AIB aid station in Niederbetschdorf was assisted by "B" Company of the 8hth Medical Battalion. Even in this town the wounded were not entirely safe. On one occasion a German jet-propelled plane dropped it bomb load close to the rear aid station.\*\* A few injured showed fright when the windows blew out, but were soon quieted down by the medics. Steel helmets were placed on the patients and the aid men methodically began their work again.

Injured men were evacuated from Hatten during the dark hours of the night. The route used was from "Y" Street south to the railroad tracks and thence west to Niederbetschdorf. As one half-track was taking its precious load of wounded to Niederbetschdorf, the vehicle was struck by a German artillery round. The explosion killed the driver and wounded aid man Tec 5 Edward B. Powell occupying the front seat. The injured men dragged themselves away from the track to the shelter of the ground. After assuring themselves that all was safe, the wounded helped each

PARTICIPATE AND A STATE OF THE PARTY OF THE

\*\* - Several attacks were made by German ME-262 planes. History 79th
Div Artillery, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1945

<sup>\* -</sup> All aid men of the 19th AIB Medics told of this story but did not know the man's name.

other back onto the vehicle and rode into Niederbetschdorf in the dark-

Men in the rear echelon took up a collection of the packages they had received from home. These delicacies along with hot coffee and doughnuts were sent to the fighers in Hatten. Rear echelon men of the fighting elements went to church daily to pray for their heric comrades engaged in the battle.

more appetizing. S/Sgt Weldon S. Shickel, (Co "A") had his mortar platoon use bed sheets for table cloths and sat down to a delicious meal while sentrics guarded against the ever present Boche. When all his men had eated, the dishes were cleared away. On the white table cloths were placed neat piles of ammo, clips, loaded magazines, basooka rounds and hand gronades. The men were all set up for comfortable fighting.

Orders were issued to permit the evacuation of twenty shock cases
from each battalion in Hatten.\* However, since almost all the men were
in a state of shock and nervousness, it was decided not to evacuate anyone in fairness to them all. The decision was approved by the fighting
soldiers "who got wind of it through the usual army grapevine".\*\* One
man approached 1st Lt. Charles B. Wallace and said in jest, "You've OOT
to evacuate me sir, I've contracted a veneral disease."

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Lt. Thoron became infuriated at one man wasting ammunition which was

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<sup>\* -</sup> Orders issued by Col. D.H. Hudelson, Commanding Officer, CO".

already at a premium. The Private was nonchantly picking off pigeons with his M-1 while a lull existed in the battle.

T/Sgt John M. Taylor, "B" Company, saw a horse roaming near his position. The Sergeant brought the horse into the barn where he fed the animal and made it comfortable. Lt. Blair asked the Sergeant, what the hell are you doing with that horse?" Sgt Taylor replied, "Just making him comfortable sir. If the Jerries attack once more, I'm going to get on this mag and pull a "Paul Revere", by racing past the OP calling the Jerries are coming ! " . \*

The enemy attempted two infantry attacks on the 18th of January, one at daylight and another at dusk, supported by a flame-throwing tank. Heavy American artillery concentrations broke them up, inflicting extremely heavy casualties on the Germans north of Hatten. \*\*\*

Artillery ammunition of all types was getting critically low and every concentration had to be certain before fire was delivered. Reconnaissance missions of American aircraft confirmed PW stories that there were approximately sixty enemy artillery batteries in front of the Hatten sector.##

At approximately 0730 on the morning of 119 January, the Germans opened up with everything they had in the form of tank, mortar and artillery fire.### Thousands of HE and AP shells from heavy guns as well as mortar rounds burst on the American held portion of Hatten. The German's target amounted to an area 200 yards north and south, and 400 yards east

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<sup># -</sup> Radlroad Station (16.0-32.8)

<sup>\*\* -</sup> History 79th Div Arty, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 19h5, S-2 Report, 315th Inf Regt

<sup>\*\*\* -</sup> History, 79th Div Artillery, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1945

<sup>## -</sup> Ibid ### - 315th Infantry, 3-2 Journal, History 79th Div Artillery

and west. The bombardment last continuously until 0900. "Men who had been at Anzio said they would gladly have welcomed a siege on the beach in lieu of that barrage on Hatten".\*

The rubble of Hatten was further scattered as the preponderant hammering and deafening noise continued. The air was raining dangerously with flying shrapmel, timber, stone and debris of all descriptions. Rounds smacked home everywhere, killing and maiming Americans and civilians alike. A direct hit exploded in a house occupied by a platoon of "A" Company men and a group of civilians. The blast killed one soldier and injured five more as well as three civilians. When the noise and concussion had subsided, civilian voices could be heard crying and screaming in terror. The injured soldiers moaned and sobbed quietly. One of the group, a seven year old Alsatian girl made her way to 2d Lt. Joseph Osborne, in command of the group. The little girl looked very clean in spite of her bedraggled clothes. She brushed the pretty dark locks of hair that fell in disorder on her tiny shoulders and asked, "Is that the Boche?". Lt. Osborne understood the German words and answered, "Yes". "Are they coming?", she asked. "No", was Osborne's reply. The girl made her way quietly back to a corner and sat down as if nothing had happened. This action quieted everybody in the cellar and kept them on an even keel. \*\*

Another direct hit struck the first aid station, injuring patients situated on the first floor and cellar of a building on the western side of Hatten. One of the four shells to hit the building burrowed through the cellar before exploding.\*\*\* Approximately 20 men in the aid station

Winds John M. Ter

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<sup># -</sup> Pfc James R. Benzinger

<sup>\*\*\* - 2</sup>d Lt. Joseph Osborne, "A" Co, 19th AlB

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were threatened in the fire that started immediately. Fortunately all the men were able to evacuate themselves as the walls began to collapse in the upstairs structure. A new aid station was set up in the cellar of another building to accommodate the forty-two American casualties suffered this day. Aid kits and plesma bottles had been blown up when the aid station was initially hit. Until replemishing supplies were brought up, the aid men worked with handkerchiefs, bed sheets and strips of blankets to supplement the shortage of bandages and aid kits.\*

Many other structures were smashed and wounded men were trapped with their dead buddies under heavy timbers caved in by the terrific barrage. These injured could not work free and had to remain with their silent comrades until help came later in the day.

Realizing the Germans would probably attack when the barrage ceased, the GIs prepared to defend their desolate positions.

Immediately after the enemy artillery concentration ceased, a German tank began to move westward on the main street while another Tiger, painted white for camouflage, prepared to flank the American positions from the southeast. The enemy tank on the main street clanked forward over the debris. This menace opened up with machine gun and 85mm fire, aided by the "burp" guns of its supporting infantry. The outpost of the American lines was pushed back until reaching both sides of the street in the vicinity of the "Fort". American tank, artillery, bancoka, maching gune, small arms fire and hand grenades prevented the enemy tanks and infantrymen from advancing through the wreckage of main street. The spirit of the fight was exemplified by Pfo's Clayton Bronson and Rene

<sup>\* -</sup> Capt. Charles Hawkins, Doctor, 19th AIB

Bessette. These men lay wounded where they had fallen, unable to move under their own power. Lt. Hlair told both he would evacuate the men as soon as possible. Bersette replied, "Don't bother about us, stop the goddamn Jerries".

s/sgt Mathias, "B" Company, 47th Tank Battalion brought his tank forward from its mobile reserve position. Mathiast tank roared ahead firing 75mm shells at the advancing enemy. Meanwhile, the German tank to the south of the town worked its way toward the barn located behind the "Fort". The Mark V opened up with a direct burst of 88mm fire into the barn. Unwounded Americans scattered in a mad melee. Lt. Young on his way into the barn stepped aside to avoid being trampled upon. The Lieutenant yelledorders but none of the men heard him. Young finally singled out S/Sgt Gregory Wiercinski and asked him for a bazooka. The Sergeant said he didn't have one. Young replied, "Give me a man and I'll get one". A bazooka was quickly obtained from a "B" Company man in the next house. Before the basooks could be put into play, the German tank, only 35 yards away, opened up with another round from its cannon. The barn trembled and then began to burn. Infantrymen attempted to flank the tank with bazooks but were singled out and blasted individually by the tank's 88mm and machine gun. \* Other men in the vicinity attempted to fire at the armor with bazookas. Unfortunately the orchard surrounding the enemy tank acted as protection and many of the basooka rounds exploded against the trees separating the tank and the Americans. American artillary fire, falling close to American occupied houses, began finding its mark on the Panzer vehicle. This fire, coupled with bazooka and launcher

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<sup>\* - 1</sup>st Lt. Russell T. Blair

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grenade fire of approximately 25 infantrymen from the "Fort" drove off the tank. But there was still a serious threat from the German infantry who were swarming in from the northeast and southeast. " The Germans! attack was let by fanatical paratroopers yelling insults such as "Yankee bastards", while they charged, \*\* supported by tanks firing from the northeast and southeast. Will Some of the German armor was identified as American Sherman tanks. "The 12th Armored Division lost a number of tanks some days ago, and now some of the armor is being used against us". Those paratroopers were of definitely superior quality and the Americans had learned to respect their fighting capabilities while in Hatten. Infantrymen took the invaders on with small arms and had grenades. American artillery laid a terrific barrage "in close". Slick black uniforms of the young German paratroopers were ripped to shreds as the blast of American artillary smashed their bones and tore off their limbs. This same American artillery concentrated on the roads leading to the north and east from Hatten to prevent enemy reinforcements attempting to aid the Germans. The enemy effort was absted by the devastating barrage. ## American positions were once more consolidated. Several Germans gave themselves up soon afterward, complaining, "They could not stand our artillary may longer".###

On January 20th, orders were received to withdraw from Hatten to a new line of defense. #### Two medium tanks and two tank destroyers with a small group of infantrymen were to act as a rear guard for the

\*\* - let Lt. Russell T. Blair, "B" Co, 19th AlB

Held - S-3 Journal, 19th AIB

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<sup># -</sup> History, 79th Div Artillery, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1945

<sup># -</sup> History, 79th Div Artillery, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1915

withdrawing units. The 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was to lead "G" Company, 315th Infantry, "A" Company and "C" Company, 19th AIB, "E" and "F" Companies, 315th Infantry, "B" Company, 19th AIB, and elements of the 2d Chemical Battalion and the 813th and 827th Tank Destroyer Battalions out.\* It was reported that the enemy may have been withdrawing to the east while the Americans withdraw to the west, but this statement is not a verified fact.

The welcome end had at last come to the struggle for possession of Hatten's rubble, the struggle which has since been compared with Cassino and Stalingrad. \*\* Hatten, the once picturesque and congenial Alsatian village was nothing but a smoldering waste. Not a building was left unscarred by the encounter which prevailed when Americans met Cermans. The battle for Hatten would long be remembered by all its alumni. Smoke billowed into the air from the still burning timbers of this historic village. Horses, cows and pigs poked about the desolation, bewilderly looking for food.

As the Americans passed out of the decaying village, they were conscious of their silent buddies left behind, still holding the rubble of Hatten. \*\*\* These Americans who had made the supreme sacrifice were not alone. For every fallen American, more than ten dermans lay dead in the cold snow, washe

The men moved quietly along the main supply route, passing numerous American and German tanks, nothing more than rust colored junk now. Down in their hearts, the men were reluctant to leave this village they had fought so gallantly to hold. They felt as if they had lost the war,

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lith Armd Div, 24 Jan 1945

<sup>\* -</sup> S-2 Report, 315th Infantry Regiment we - Ibid

ses - Ibid

<sup>\*\*\*\* -</sup> lst Lt. Russell T. Blair; Pfc James R. Benzinger \*\*\*\* - Maj Forest T. Oréene, CO, 19th AIB - History, Hq. CCR,

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had fought and suffered and died in vain.\* On the contrary, however, these warriors had gained precious time by their bitter and magnificent stand. Attack after attack by the enemy had been frustrated. The Americans, with the help of God", \*\* had managed to hold the best that Hitler had to offer.\*\*

tion to the same friendly village of Hatten through which these Americans had ridden triumphantly and unmolestingly a month before. This fact was particularly distasteful to the GIs since the enemy had used the same ground as a spring board for its attack. The stress and strain on human endurance in the see—saw, house to house, barn to barn struggle can hardly be portrayed in more phrases.

The German High Command had paid heavily in its intended smash southward. The enemy drive from the north toward Haguenau and Strassbourg to flood the Alsatian plain had been drastically stalled. The potent enemy thrust, destined to play such an important part in Germany's plans had been checked. Although the main line of resistance was forced back in depth, the German drive had lost its force and became a limited penetration instead of the much desired break-through over this section of the Alsatian plain. The Enemy strategy was completely mastered and befuddled. American commanders had been given sufficient time to properly contend with the enemy's potentially mighty break-through which in reality became a trickle.

<sup># - 1</sup>st Lt. Russell T. Blair; Pfc James R. Benzinger ## - 2d Lt. Joesph Osborne, "A" Company, 19th AIB

<sup>\*\*\* - 315</sup>th Infantry Regiment, S-2 Report

<sup># - 315</sup>th Infantry Regiment, S-2 Report
## - G-2, 1hth Armored Division, Lt. Col. Harold E. Miller
### - S-2 Report, 315th Infantry Regiment

The strategic evacuation completely surprised the Germans and they did not attempt to follow.\* Bremy interference with the withdrawal was negligible although light harassing fire fell during the period.\*\*

The withdrawal continued over ice and snow until reaching the vicinity of Haguenau, along the Moder River. Elements of the 1hth Armored' Division and 79th Infantry Division tied in with the new mail line of resistance. This was the line they had been gaining time for other organizations to establish. The heroes of Hatten and Rittershoffen established contact with the 36th Infantry Division and 12th Armored Division in the Haguenau sector.\*\*

Casualties of CCR in Hatten were: Killed in action, 3 Officers and 23 enlisted men; wounded in action, 13 officers and 272 enlisted men; missing in action, 1 officer and 50 enlisted men. Equipment lost: 17 medium tanks, 5 light tanks, 1 half-track, 3, 75mm anti-tenk guns, 1, SCR 506, 1, SCR 300. Enemy losses were established at: Killed in action 678; wounded in action, 1000. Enemy equipment lost: 7 Mark IV Tanks; 6 anti-tank guns, 3, 3/P guns, 16 machine and 36 bazookas.\*\*\*\*\*

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\*\*\* - S-2 Report, 315th Infantry Regiment

\*\*\* - See overlay with S-2 Journal, 11th Armd Div, 79th Inf Div

lst Lt. Edgar B. Mooney, Jr. Historical Section
Hq. Seventh Army

<sup># -</sup> Division History, 79th Div, period 1 Jan - 31 Jan 15

see 315th Regt, 14th AIB, 242d Regt "Admission and Disposition"

\*E-X-P-E-N-D-I-T-U-R-E-S\*

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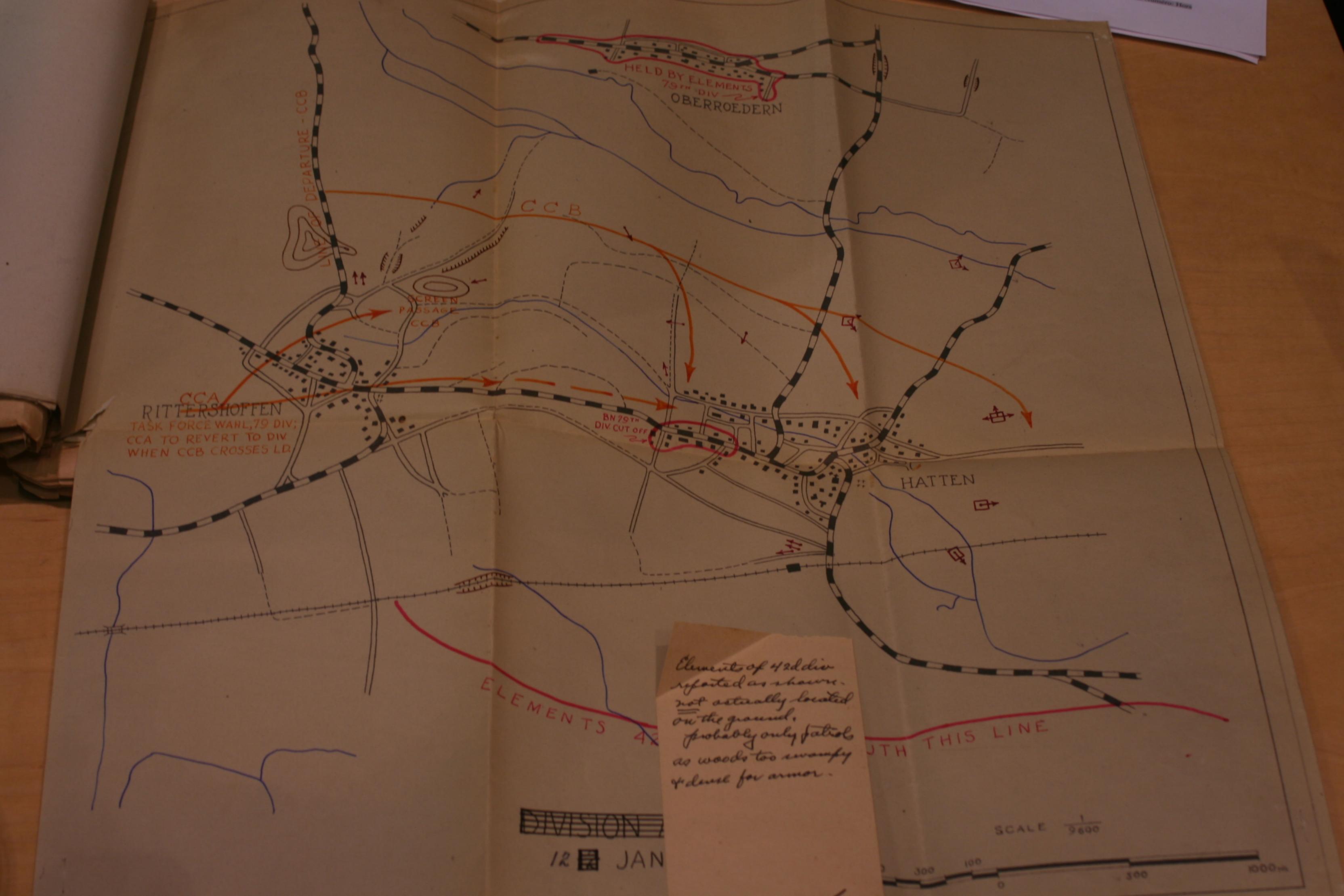
VEHICLES
Trk, & Ton 15
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Trk, Lt, M5 12
Trk, Med, M4 27
Trk, 21 Ton 3
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Carriage
Mtr, 105
Half-Track 5
Tk Recovery 1
Car, Armd 1
Ambulance 1
Gun, 57mm 6

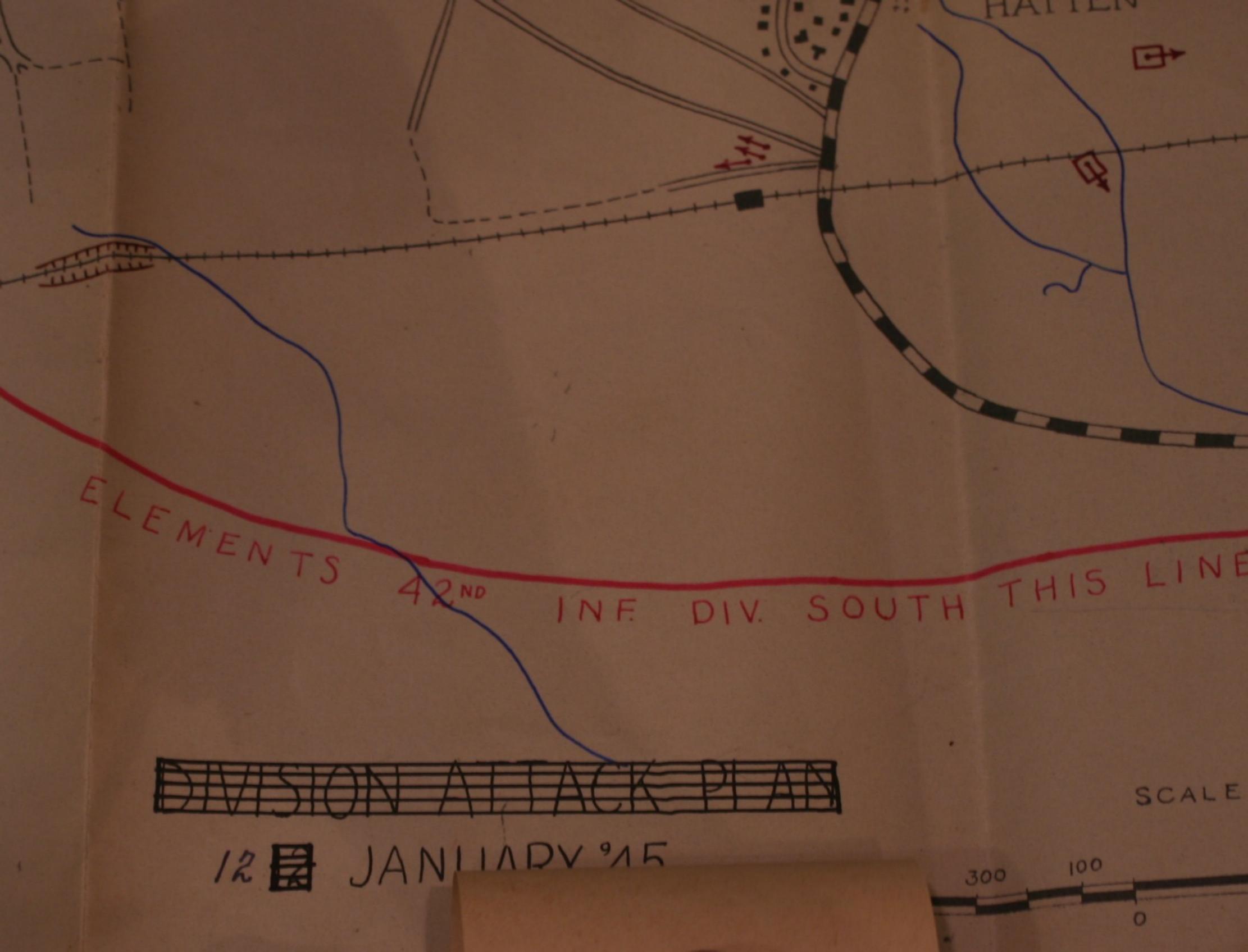
AMBIUNITION TYPE Carbine Cal. .30 Cal. .45 Cal. .50 37mm 57mm 76mm 60mm 81mm Hvy Arty Med Arty Lt Arty Rocket 2.36 Grenades Mines Bombs

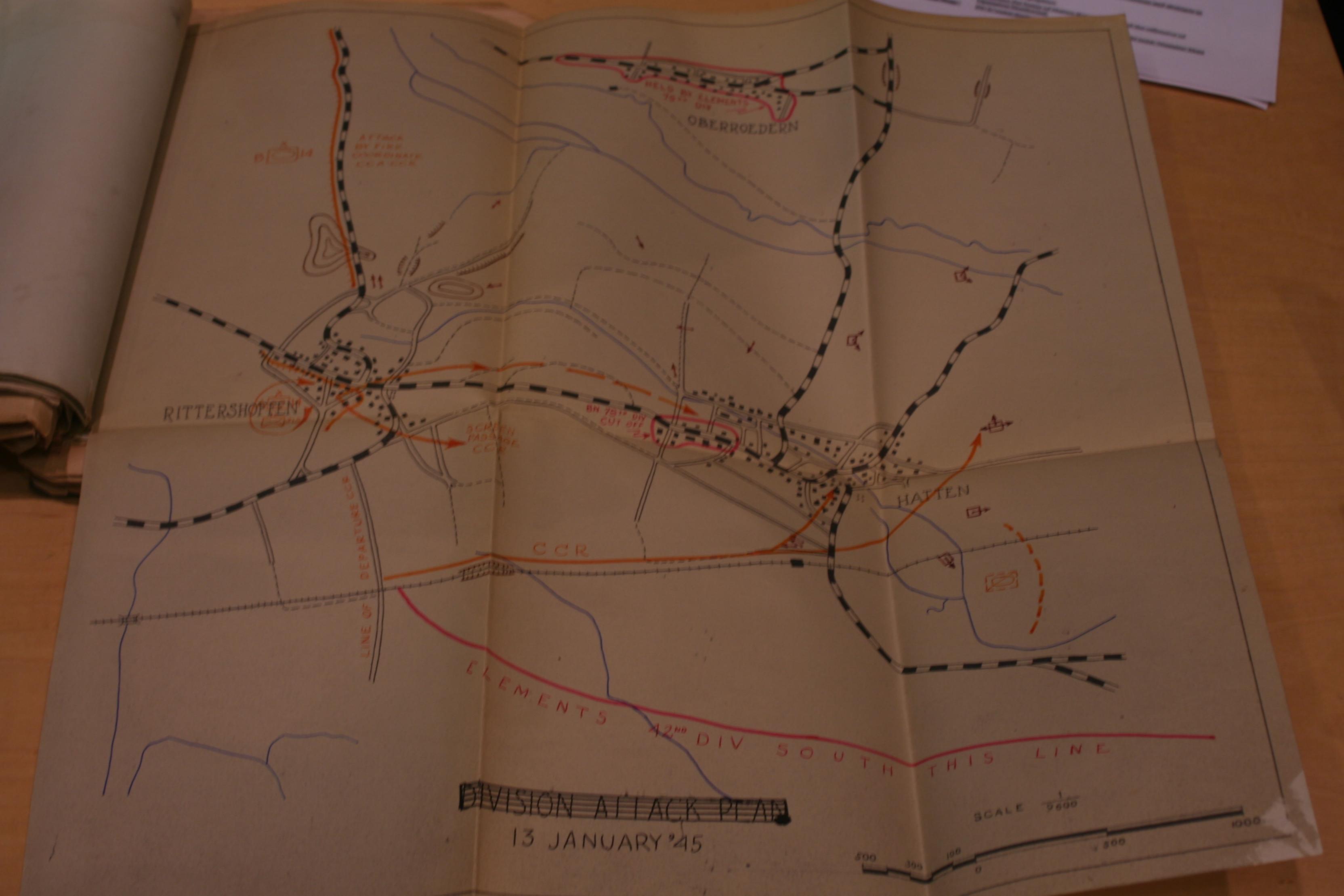
GASOLINE EXPENDED: 193,300 Gallons















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Rest of the Resources was